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Goals of the *Africanus Journal*

The *Africanus Journal* is an award-winning interdisciplinary biblical, theological, and practical journal of the Campus for Urban Ministerial Education (CUME). Its goals are to promote:

- the mission and work of the members and mentors of the Africanus Guild Ph.D. Research Program of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, Boston;
- the principles of the Africanus Guild (evangelical orthodox Christian men and women who are multicultural, multiracial, urban-oriented, studying a Bible without error in a cooperative way);
- Christian scholarship that reflects an evangelical perspective, as an affiliate of GCTS-Boston. This is an interdisciplinary journal that publishes high quality articles in areas such as biblical studies, theology, church history, religious research, case studies, and studies related to practical issues in urban ministry. Special issues are organized according to themes or topics that take seriously the contextual nature of ministry situated in the cultural, political, social, economic, and spiritual realities in the urban context.

Scholarly papers may be submitted normally by those who have or are in (or are reviewed by a professor in) a Th.M., D.Min., Ed.D., Th.D., ST.D., Ph.D., or equivalent degree program.

Two issues normally are published per year.

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Life of Julius Africanus

Julius Africanus was probably born in Jerusalem, many scholars think around AD 200. Africanus was considered by the ancients as a man of consummate learning and sharpest judgment (*Ante-Nicene Fathers* 6:128). He was a pupil of Heracles, distinguished for philosophy and other Greek learning, in Alexandria, Egypt around AD 231–233. In AD 220/226, he performed some duty in behalf of Nicopolis (formerly Emmaus) in Palestine. Later he likely became bishop of Emmaus (Eusebius, *History*, VI.xviii.2). Origen calls him “a beloved brother in God the Father, through Jesus Christ, His holy Child” (*Letter from Origen to Africanus* 1). Fellow historian Eusebius distinguishes him as “no ordinary historian” (*History*, I. vi.2). Eusebius describes the five books of *Chronologies* as a “monument of labor and accuracy” and cites extensively from his harmony of the evangelists’ genealogies (*History*, VI. xxxi. 1–3). Africanus was a careful historian who sought to defend the truth of the Bible. He is an ancient example of meticulous, detailed scholarship which is historical, biblical, truthful, and devout.

Even though Eusebius describes Africanus as the author of the *Kestoi*, Jerome makes no mention of this (*ANF* 6:124). The author of *Kestoi* is surnamed Sextus, probably a Libyan philosopher who arranged a library in the Pantheon at Rome for the Emperor. The *Kestoi* was probably written toward the end of the 200s. It was not written by a Christian since it contains magical incantations (*Oxyrhynchus Papyri* III.412).

The Greek text of Africanus’ writings may be found in Martinus Josephus Routh, *Reliquiae sacrae* II (New York: Georg Olms Verlag, 1974 [1846]), 225–309, and Martin Wallraff, Umberto Roberto, Karl Pinggéra, eds., William Adler, trans., *Julius Africanus Chronographiae: The Extant Fragments, Die Griechischen Christlichen Schriftsteller* 15 (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2007).

The extant writings of Julius Africanus may be found in vol. 1, no 1, April 2009 edition of the *Africanus Journal*.

Other Front Matter

Editorial Team for the issue: Lark Kelsey, Emmanuel Gyamera Yamoah, J. Saemi Kim, Seong Park, Nicole Rim, John Runyon, Aída Besançon Spencer, William David Spencer

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Summary of Content:

This issue concerns topics related to Africa and the global church, relational issues, the Old and New Testament, the leadership of women, and charismatic Christianity.

THE AFRICANUS GUILD



L to R: Quonekuia Day, Mark Chuanhang Shan, Jennifer Creamer

"If not for the Africanus Guild, I would not even think of getting a Ph.D. and would not have had the chance to teach my own course at Gordon-Conwell, and be trained to be a Bible teacher, and for this I am most grateful." –Benjamin Fung

Benjamin Fung's Ph.D. was received from North-West University in South Africa 2017
Quonekuia Day and Mark Shan are Ph.D. candidates with London School of Theology.
Jennifer Creamer received her Ph.D. from North-West University in 2016.

The Africanus Guild is a support program set up to assist selective, underrepresented constituencies to pursue research Ph.D.s from North-West University and London School of Theology. The Guild is especially oriented to the multicultural, multiracial urban scene. Accepted students are mentored by a Gordon-Conwell faculty member. Candidates may complete the Th.M. at the Boston campus and then apply to the Guild.

Saved from Demons? Insights from the Soteriology and Demonology of Byang Kato

SCOTT D. MACDONALD

“I was dedicated to serve the Devil as a baby,” wrote Byang Kato. Yet, by the grace of God, this infant grew up to become “a happy child of God” and “the founding father of African evangelical theology.”¹ Kato spoke plainly concerning his spiritual transformation, and much of his brief literary output focused on the quality of the salvation message proclaimed on the African continent. His work *Theological Pitfalls in Africa* continues to be read and referenced. His background and the Bible he embraced led him to a soteriology that addressed the demons described in Scripture and encountered in the world.

In this article, I begin by overviewing Kato’s background and his relevance to the global church. I originally explored Kato in my dissertation *A Critical Analysis of Byang Kato’s Demonology and Its Theological Relevance for an Evangelical Demonology*, and my intent is to draw from that research and build upon it with recent contributions concerning Kato and from the demonological field.² For example, Aiah Foday-Khabenje’s newly published *Byang Kato: The Life and Legacy of Africa’s Pioneer Evangelical Theologian* is a significant step forward for the academic study of Kato.³ I also assess and analyze Kato’s theological integration of biblical demonology and soteriology, utilizing a chronological survey of personal soteriology (i.e., how we were saved, how we are being saved, and how we will be saved). In each case, Kato’s contributions include analyzing the demonic, emphasizing deliverance not only from sin but also from demons.

While primarily reflecting on Kato’s unique perspective and evaluating the relationship between his demonology and soteriology, I also interact with the wealth of contributions to Evangelical demonology in the past six years (i.e., Graham Cole’s *Against the Darkness*; John Gilhooly’s *40 Questions about Angels, Demons, and Spiritual Warfare*; Michael Heiser’s *Demons*, Andrew Naselli’s *The Serpent and the Serpent Slayer*; and Daniel Darko’s *Against Principalities and Powers*). Ultimately, I argue that Kato integrates demonology and soteriology in a way that is both sensitive to the experience of Global Evangelicalism and the exposition of Scripture. In that light, I propose some suggestions (supported by Kato and recent scholarship) for the continued development of Christian soteriology that it may more accurately reflect the demonological realities of Scripture. In sum, this article outlines Kato’s life, clarifies the relationship between Kato’s demonology and soteriology, offers an evaluation of Kato’s soteriology and demonology based on current scholarship, and poses a few suggestions for the integration of demonology into Evangelical soteriology.

KATO’S BACKGROUND AND CONTINUING RELEVANCE

In 1936, Byang Kato was born in the town of Kwoi, into the Jaba tribe of Kaduna State, Nigeria.⁴ More critically, as firstborn to Heni and Zawi Kato, he became the heir of religious leadership for his family. His father served as priest to Pop-Ku, also called Kuno. Byang later described this being as Satan. As Byang grew, seven of Byang’s younger siblings perished. Byang

1 Byang Kato, “The Devil’s Baby,” *Africa Now*, Jan-Mar 1962, 10–11. Kato is widely called the father of African Evangelicalism. The specific title provided above comes from Mark Shaw (Mark Shaw, *The Kingdom of God in Africa* [Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1996], 278.)

2 Portions of this article are derived from my doctoral research. See more about Kato’s demonological perspective in *A Critical Analysis of Byang Kato’s Demonology and Its Theological Relevance for an Evangelical Demonology* (Pretoria, SA: University of South Africa Dissertation, 2017).

3 Aiah Foday-Khabenje, *Byang Kato: The Life and Legacy of Africa’s Pioneer Evangelical Theologian* (Carlisle, UK: Langham, 2023).

4 Sophie de la Haye, *Byang Kato: Ambassador for Christ* (Achimota, Ghana: African Christian Press, 1986), 17.

lived, and through the eyes of others, he was apparently being preserved by Kuno himself. The future of Byang was set: He would be a juju priest, upholding the honor of his family. Sophie de la Haye describes Kato's spiritual upbringing: "Byang's father took every opportunity to instruct his son in fetish practices. At harvest-time, before any grain was eaten, he taught him how to offer the firstfruits at the base of the sycamore tree, believed to be the dwelling place of spirits. He also instructed him in the art of offering [blood] sacrifices."⁵ And according to local cultural and spiritual rites, Byang successfully became a man, surviving the difficult challenges that accompanied puberty. But the one true God interrupted; the Lord had selected Kato for another purpose.

A missionary came to Kato's hometown. Mary Haas, who shared about Christ in the Jaba language, was with the Sudan Interior Mission, and Byang's curiosity was drawn by her phonograph which could also communicate in the trade language of Hausa. Christien Bremen, comments, "The black box was fascinating to Byang and his friends."⁶

While Kato attended the mission school, Byang's parents quickly moved from uninterested to hostile. Kato's perception was that his parents thought that he "was bringing shame upon the family by not worshipping juju."⁷ But a pastor friend kept requesting Byang's return, and eventually, coupled with Byang's insistence, the parents caved into this persistence. While Kato would eventually call Mary his "spiritual mother," he did not claim Christ and accept salvation until another teacher expounded on Noah and the Ark. He publicly identified with Christianity, thereby rejecting the religion of his ancestors.

The family's reaction was initially harsh, which was unsurprising since the religious hopes and heritage of the family rested upon Byang. De la Haye explains, "When his father learned that Byang had made a public commitment to Jesus Christ at school and saw that he was following Christ openly, he was furious. He beat him, refused to give him food, and took his shirt away."⁸ Yet Byang gave up everything and chose Christ, being baptized at the age of twelve before a crowd of hundreds. He even had to work to cover his own school expenses. But, sadly, his life still lacked transformation and victory. Kato confessed, "Youthful lusts held me in their grip, and my testimony was a mockery to the Name of Christ."⁹

In 1953, the seventeen-year-old Byang was caught up in a revival.¹⁰ People were repenting of their sins and giving sacrificially to support missionary efforts. While Kato had identified with Christianity, this is when Kato truly yielded to God, vowing to serve God alone. This led to a courageous step: enrolling in Bible college.

From his youth onward, Byang Kato was vigorous in his pursuit of education. Despite the protests of his peers and their ridicule, Igbaja Bible College was the path forward for Kato. He married Jummai during his final year, and he still juggled many responsibilities.¹¹ He went on to secure his Bachelor's degree abroad at London Bible College, and, by 1970, Kato was at Dallas Theological Seminary (DTS), earning his Master's degree. Due to his incredible persistence, he had his Th.D. from DTS by May of 1974.

Supporting Christian education and the church of Africa continued to be his passion. He was a gifted writer with a host of articles – crowned by his greatest work *Theological Pitfalls in Africa*. At his height, he was considered by Bruce Nicholls "the most outstanding evangelical theological

5 de la Haye, *Byang Kato*, 7. Clarification added.

6 Christien M. Bremen, "A Portrait of Dr. Byang H. Kato," *African Journal of Evangelical Theology* 15.2, 135–151.

7 Kato, "The Devil's Baby," 10–11.

8 de la Haye, *Byang Kato*, 19.

9 Kato, "The Devil's Baby," 10–11.

10 Foday-Khabenje, *Byang Kato*, 46–47.

11 Foday-Khabenje, *Byang Kato*, 50–60.

leader in Africa.”¹² He wielded his immense intellect against the pressing dangers of his time: syncretism and universalism (which he regularly called “Christo-paganism”), and that context is crucial for understanding the totality of his work. The battle for African Christianity would be fought by academics, and Kato marshalled the Evangelical church to remedy its “theological anemia.”¹³ His concerns and warnings still sound throughout Africa.

However, Kato’s message of biblical centrality and his warnings against syncretism were not readily accepted by many of his academic peers in Africa. Kwame Bediako criticized Kato’s perspective as not properly accounting for cultural realities since he felt it could not “provide a sufficient foundation for the tradition of creative theological engagement that the African context seemed to be requiring.”¹⁴ Sadly, because Bediako outlived Kato, Bediako’s critiques have left a mark on Kato’s legacy that Kato could not refute.¹⁵ Yet Kato’s legacy is still strong across the continent, thanks to his pioneering work in Evangelical higher education. The Association for Christian Theological Education in Africa originally blossomed from Kato’s work, and it serves as a prominent accrediting body for African institutions.

But as quickly as he rose to prominence, Kato was hastily ushered into heavenly glory. In December 1975, his body was found drowned, and the circumstances were curious, since he was a skilled swimmer.¹⁶ Among the global Evangelical community, shock was felt by all. By his own testimony, he has been a man consigned to Satan’s service then freed by Christ. He became Evangelicalism’s shining beacon throughout sub-Saharan Africa. But his light was extinguished, and it seemed to be too soon.

KATO’S THEOLOGICAL INTEGRATION OF DEMONOLOGY AND SOTERIOLOGY

Kato only wrote one booklet on the spirits (*What the Bible Teaches: The Spirits*). It was published in 1975, shortly before his death. But demonology appears throughout his works, perceptively integrating biblical demonology into his soteriology.

In general, Kato’s primary focus is soteriology. In *Theological Pitfalls in Africa*, he vehemently defends a soteriology of exclusivism (i.e., trust in Christ is the only path of salvation). He declares, “The spirits are always associated with ‘Kuno,’ Satan. Jaba have never doubted the existence or activities of Satan. He is a real person to them.”¹⁷ But what should the Jaba do? Kato answers, “The dominating fears and superstitions concerning the spirit world are so dreadful that an instantaneous and complete cure is what Jaba people need.” The religious beliefs of the Jaba are unable to supply that cure, and that is why Kato states:

Jaba religion is a recognition of the craving after the Supreme Being, a search for reality in life, but at the same time a flight from God the Creator and Redeemer. The beliefs of African traditional religions only locate the problem; the practices point away from the solution; the Incarnate risen Christ alone is the answer. Christianity is a radical faith and it must transform sinners radically.¹⁸

Traditional religion does illuminate need, but one’s relationship to the spirit realm should necessarily be transformed by the biblical worldview, especially when those spirits are agents of terror and fear.

12 Christien M. Bremen, “A Portrait of Dr. Byang H. Kato,” *AJET* 15.2, 135–151.

13 Detlef Kapteina, “The Formation of Evangelical African Theology,” *AJET* 25.1, 62.

14 Kwame Bediako, *Jesus and the Gospel in Africa* (New York, NY: Orbis, 2004), 55.

15 For a recent review of Kato’s strengths and weaknesses concerning contextualization, see Sochanngam Shirik’s article “African Christians or Christian Africans: Byang H. Kato and His Contextual Theology” in *The Asbury Journal* (74.1, 131–156).

16 Foday-Khabenje, *Byang Kato*, 81–85.

17 Byang Kato, *Theological Pitfalls in Africa* (Kisumu, Kenya: Evangel, 1975), 37.

18 Kato, *Pitfalls*, 38.

In *Pitfalls*, Kato, almost like an Old Testament prophet, shows little mercy for writers like John Mbiti. After quoting Mbiti at length, Kato scathingly responds, “Mbiti’s universalism comes out in its essence here. All men, Christians and non-Christians alike will be saved. He is just one step short of Origen who taught that even Satan will be saved in the final analysis.”¹⁹

Beyond *Pitfalls*, he still speaks boldly. At an ecumenical conference in Germany, Kato said the following:

Jesus Christ is unique and the only way of salvation. “Jesus answered, ‘I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me’” (Jn. 14:6). “Salvation is found in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). To reject Christ is to reject the abundant life, no matter how religious a person may be.²⁰

Kato certainly has a robust exclusivism! We can discern how Kato’s pre-Christian (or he might say Satanic) religious experience feeds into his soteriology. Foday-Khabenje points out that Kato, above all his critics among his contemporaries, probably had the most personal experience and pedigree within African Tradition Religion.²¹ But in addition to his background (which is important to consider in relation to this topic), his integration of soteriology with demonology arises from biblical grounds. Let us now trifurcate soteriology to discuss Kato’s contributions concerning How We Were Saved, How We Are Being Saved, and How We Will Be Saved. Demonology plays a role in each one.

HOW WE WERE SAVED

The first branch pertains to that from which we are saved. One of the strongest intersections of Kato’s demonology and soteriology is in the midst of his vigorous defense of evangelism. Commenting on a 1963 continental meeting in Kampala, Uganda, he observes:

There was no confusion as to the fact that without the Gospel of Christ, Africa was in “darkness of pagan rituals.” This was no abuse of African culture, but an honest admission of the undiluted gospel of Jesus Christ which sees that “the whole world lies in the power of the evil one” (1 John 5:19). Kampala recognized true freedom and liberation.... Instead of compromisingly seeking peaceful coexistence with all religions, Kampala delegates were prepared to lay down their lives for the true gospel of Christ.²²

The strength, character, and authority of the “evil one” are relevant because that information helps define redemption itself. The gospel has a different tune when we incorporate our deliverance from demonic powers and the dominion of darkness. The news of an evil one also impresses upon Christ’s servants the peril of the lost.

Kato’s citation of 1 John 5:19b requires some reflection. Kato is portraying a world in moral, spiritual, and religious bondage – under the thumb of a manipulative overlord, and from his exclusivist viewpoint, only the gospel of Jesus Christ delivers people from that predicament. But is that what the biblical author intended to convey? Let us reflect on 1 John 5:18–19 itself: “We know that no one who is born of God sins; but He who was born of God keeps him, and the evil one does not touch him. We know that we are of God, and that the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.” The immediate contextual question is “How is one born of God,” and the author answers our query in 5:1, saying, “Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God.”

Trust in Christ is the defining factor as to whether one is born of God! This, then, carries down into our reading of verses 18–19. Let us try to sum up the points here. First, those who believe in

¹⁹ Kato, *Pitfalls*, 87.

²⁰ Byang Kato, “Ecumenicals - Evangelicals Debate in Germany,” *Perception* 2.1 (1975), 1–8.

²¹ Foday-Khabenje, *Byang Kato*, 164.

²² Kato, *Pitfalls*, 150.

Jesus as the Messiah are born of God. Second, those who are born of God are protected from the evil one. Third, a two-party distinction exists in 1 John 5. Those who are born of God are with God, and those who are not ("the whole world") are under the power of the evil one. With that commentary and summary, Kato's use of the text seemingly fits.

Seizing upon 1 John 5:19 (and a number of other texts like 2 Cor 4:4 and 1 Pet 5:8), Graham Cole (*Against the Darkness*) similarly recognizes that "the world is under the sway of the evil one. There is then a consistent claim found in Jesus, Paul, Peter, and John that this world is the devil's domain."²³

Recognizing that the world is dominated and ruled by false gods, our soteriology must be reshaped. We not only live in a sinful world; we inhabit a realm of demonic powers. "In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God."²⁴ If we remember the parable of the soils, Satan snatches away the truth according to Mark's gospel.²⁵ The world and its systems (including idolatries and religious practices which organize and saturate the nations) are orchestrated by Satan and his affiliates.

How then do we transfer from the dominion of the devil? The Scripture states that such a handover takes place. As a preacher of the gospel of Jesus, Paul was specifically commanded to turn persons from "the dominion of Satan to God."²⁶ Cole even remarks on this text about how Paul's apostolic ministry is framed "in terms of opposing Satan."²⁷ Kato is not unusual when he speaks in such a way, seeing salvation as deliverance from Satan.

HOW WE ARE BEING SAVED

The second branch relates to how we are being saved – the struggle of persevering in the faith even as God preserves us by His grace. While the meeting of soteriology and demonology flourishes in *Pitfalls*, it also flowers in the booklet about *The Spirits* and his other writings. In *The Spirits*, Kato contends:

[Demons] may bring physical suffering or religious persecution to the Christian to try to separate him from the love of God, but they cannot succeed in the case of a true Christian. "For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come... will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:38, 39).²⁸

A few pages later, Kato adds "The Christian must actively resist Satan. 'Resist the devil and he will flee from you' (James 4:7) Although God Himself enables the Christian to escape from temptation, the Christian needs to take an active move to gain victory over sin."²⁹

Kato displays a Christian life that involves continued opposition from and resistance toward

23 Graham A. Cole, *Against the Darkness* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2019), 101.

24 Second Cor 4:4. Garland argues, "Paul must be referring to Satan as the god of this age. He classifies Satan as a 'god' because he has a dominion, however limited by the one true God, and has subjects whom Paul labels 'unbelievers.'" (David E. Garland, *2 Corinthians*, NAC [Nashville, TN: B&H Publishers, 1999], 211.)

25 Mark 4:15. Lenski comments, "Through the ears the Word 'has been sown into them,' and... is now lying in the minds of these hearers but does not stay there to do its blessed work. Satan, moved by his inordinate wickedness and opposition to God, snatches the sown Word away from these hearers." (R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Mark's Gospel* [Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 1961], 172.)

26 Acts 26:18. Parsons says, "No longer blinded himself, Paul is sent to open their eyes so that they might turn from darkness to light and from the authority of Satan to God so that they might receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Christ (26:18)... The language of transformation includes also turning from the authority of Satan to God; once again the issue of obedience to a higher authority is broached." (Mikeal C. Parsons, *Acts*, Paideia: Commentaries on the New Testament [Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008], 343)

27 Graham A. Cole, *Against the Darkness* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2019), 101.

28 Byang Kato, *What the Bible Teaches: The Spirits* (Achimota, Ghana: African Christian Press, 1975), 19.

29 Kato, *The Spirits*, 28.

demonic powers. The late Michael Heiser depicts this ongoing struggle as well. “While Christians cannot be owned by Satan – an idea that derives from the unfortunate ‘possession’ language – they can be demonized. Demonization can take various forms: persecution, harassment, being captivated by false teaching, and enslavement to sin.”³⁰ In other words, fallen spiritual powers are not gone the moment we believe. As Daniel Darko (*Against Principalities and Powers*) posits, “God’s great work in Christ... led to the subjugation of all ‘principalities and powers’ under his feet.”³¹ Yet he adds, “His triumph does *not* render the powers inert, impotent or incapable of influencing human affairs.”³² Seeing suffering, persecution, and temptation as occasionally demonic, Kato both reaffirms a Christian’s need to resist demons actively even as we rely upon God’s loving protection over us.³³

Drawing from James 4:7 along with Ephesians 6, 1 Peter 5, and other texts, Andrew Naselli (*The Serpent and the Serpent-Slayer*) portrays the Christian life’s resistance of the devil in this way:

We fight the serpent by believing and speaking the truth. By upholding righteousness. By preaching the gospel to ourselves and those around us. By unwaveringly trusting in God. By living like what we are – delivered from serving the serpent. By understanding and applying God’s word. By praying at all times in the Spirit for ourselves and brothers and sisters.³⁴

We do not fight in accordance with our own abilities. Christians are not saving themselves. Instead, God’s grace abounds to us, saving and preserving us. Quoting 1 John 4:4, Naselli adds, “You cannot defeat the serpent on your own. But God is greater than the serpent.”³⁵ Kato and Naselli do not separate the Christian experience of serving the Lord, growing in holiness, persevering in trial from the demonic powers that dominate this age.

Our ongoing sanctification and growth in godliness involve more than a battle against our sinful desires and the worldly patterns of our age. Through our daily lives as followers of Christ and members of His kingdom, we are warring with demonic powers on the personal, familial, corporate, and national levels. Paul explains exactly how we have been equipped for such a conflict with “spiritual forces in the heavenly places” in Ephesians 6 – the provided armor of God. We are therefore urged to battle primarily through holy and obedient living, resting on the resources secured through the cross – righteousness, truth, peace, faith, salvation, the Spirit, and access to God in prayer. As the yeast of the kingdom of God is kneaded into this world through evangelism and missions (to borrow imagery from Jesus’ parable in Matthew 13:33), Satan and the other demonic powers are increasingly exposed as false gods – no gods – with laws and practices that only enslave.

HOW WE WILL BE SAVED

The third branch speaks to how we will be saved – eschatological soteriology. Kato also portrays an intermingled soteriology and demonology in this arena. In his conclusion to the booklet on the spirits, after a command to test the spirits, Kato says,

Always compare every teaching or practice with Jesus Christ. Some questions you can ask are: Does such practice or teaching recognize that Jesus Christ is truly God and truly man? Does it uphold the fact that He was born of a Virgin, died and rose again as the only Saviour of the one who accepts Him? Does it teach that Jesus Christ went up to heaven and that He is now praying for the believers?... Does it recognize that the

³⁰ Michael S. Heiser, *Demons* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2020), 256.

³¹ Daniel K. Darko, *Against Principalities and Powers* (Carlisle, UK: HippoBooks, 2020), 147.

³² Darko, *Against Principalities*, 147. Emphasis added.

³³ Andrew Naselli also refers to Satan’s work of occasional persecution (Andrew D. Naselli, *The Serpent and the Serpent-Slayer* [Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2020], 131). See the letter to Smyrna in Revelation 2 for a biblical example.

³⁴ Naselli, *The Serpent*, 128.

³⁵ Naselli, *The Serpent*, 131.

wicked may even prosper in this life through their dealings with evil spirits but the day is coming when Jesus Christ will put down all principalities and powers, and become Lord of Lords and King of Kings? Only the teaching that answers these questions positively is in line with God's Word. If you are trusting in Jesus Christ alone to be saved from your sins, be assured that you are now a child of God and that you do not need to fear evil spirits or seek any help from them through magic or charms. 'And therefore I suffer as I do. But I am not as harmed for I know whom I have believed, and I am sure that he is able to guard until that Day what has been entrusted to me' (2 Timothy 1:12).³⁶

Kato sprints through all three aspects of salvation. He mentions that trusting in Jesus frees us from sin and from the fear of spirits. He posits that the life of Christians may be difficult as others prosper "through their dealings with evil spirits." But ultimately, Kato leads us to the ultimate hope – the return of Jesus Christ and the day of judgment. In the words of John Gilhooly, "How glorious is our King! Although for now the Devil is the god of this world, God will cast him down at the time of his choosing."³⁷ Naselli concludes his book by saying, "In the end we will jubilantly rejoice that Jesus has finally conquered the serpent."³⁸

Kato assumes a two-fold authority system for the world. The world is currently ruled by principalities and powers (used synonymously with evil spirits), and since Jesus Christ is God, He will ultimately return and overthrow the present cosmic order and the various works of the enemy (e.g., magic, charms, other "dealings"). The only present escape provided from sin and the powers is through "trusting in Jesus Christ." This strict dichotomy resounds throughout other areas of Kato's work, such as *Africa under the Cross*.³⁹ In essence, Kato depicts two types of people – those who have been, are being, and will be saved by Jesus through faith and those who are not freed from Satan and the powers.

Ultimately, the kingdom of God and its King will come in the fullest sense, and every evil power will be thrown down, as the true Lord establishes His dominion and vindicates His right to rule, unseating the cruel spiritual masters of this world. And, by His grace, we will crush Satan in and with Christ (Rom 16:20), in harmony with the protoevangelium.⁴⁰

CONCLUSION

In this article, we glanced through Kato's unique life and ministry. We observed how his demonology and soteriology intersected. And, as we have seen in Kato and other writers, soteriology, from first to last, has its proper form when shaped in partnership with a robust demonology.

Let us finish by considering two suggestions for us today. As a theology instructor, I am always considering, reconsidering, and revising my systematic theology. As we have briefly considered the junction of soteriology and demonology in Byang Kato's writing (in partnership with some recent scholarship), here are two issues that arise as I reconsider my systematic approach.

³⁶ Kato, *The Spirits*, 31–32.

³⁷ John R. Gilhooly, *40 Questions about Angels, Demons, and Spiritual Warfare* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic, 2018), 94.

³⁸ Naselli, *The Serpent*, 131.

³⁹ Kato says, "Every individual is a sinner and since individuals make up human structures, those structures are also corrupt. Human effort may and should help improve the society. But the prince of this world Satan is the ruler of this world system. The system awaits God's final judgement. The believers being saved out of this world system, are called out of darkness into His marvelous light." (Byang Kato, "Africa under the Cross" [1 Corinthians 1:18–25: Voice of Kenya at Nairobi Baptist Church, November 16, 1975], n.p.).

⁴⁰ Spurgeon notes, "God does the crushing but Satan 'ends up under the feet of believers,' analogous to Genesis 3:15, where the seed of the woman crushes the serpent's head. Similarly, the church – empowered by the peace of God and grace of the Lord Christ – will find Satan crushed under its feet." (Andrew B. Spurgeon, *Romans*, Asia Bible Commentary [Carlisle, UK: Langham, 2020], 269.)

First, we can better prevent a potential slide toward inclusivism and pluralism through a consistent integration of demonology into soteriology. Of course, demonology will not be a primary theme in soteriology. We can also debate what sections of the *Ordo Salutis* (e.g., Regeneration, Conversion, Adoption, etc.) merits the clarification, but surely 1 John 5's teaching concerning the whole world being under evil's rule should be included. Such an analysis further solidifies our claim that salvation is found in Christ alone – not in any other religious system.

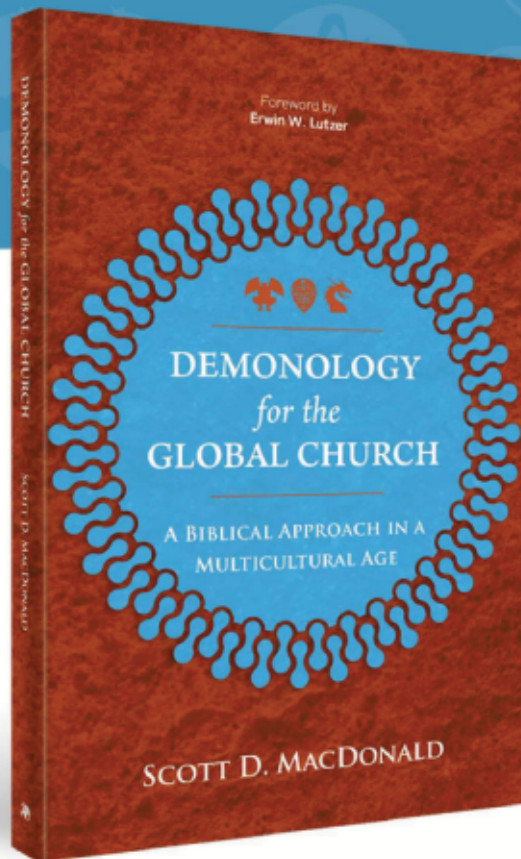
Second, we can better comprehend and respond to the challenges of the Christian life (and progressive sanctification) when we are conscious of the demonic's ongoing role in the world. And when the defeat of the demonic is emphasized in eschatological soteriology, it provides hope to the suffering and struggling Christian as well. In other words, both in the ongoing and ultimate aspects of salvation, we need to retain teachings concerning the role and defeat of the demonic. Our greatest hope is that Christ is coming, and, in the waiting, we can take courage in the reminder that we can and will overcome the evil one in Christ.

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What Is an Evangelical?: Theological Baggage, Colonial Legacies, and African Evangelicals

JULIUS KITHINJI

INTRODUCTION

The label of evangelicalism is a fluid category in contemporary Africa...oscillating from mainline missionary churches, Pentecostal churches, and even charismatic churches. The problem of naming contributes a lot to this fluidity. There are those who term themselves as evangelicals and term others as not, those who are termed evangelicals and even those who are evangelicals without being aware of it. There are obvious definitional and functional overlaps between Pentecostalism, charismatics, and evangelicals in Africa that make it difficult to label a particular segment of any population as evangelical and that therefore counts for amorphous usage of the terminology in the contemporary African scene. Initially, the term was applied to churches that were founded by the missionaries but with time the term has come to mean many things. As Mark Noll has noted, efforts to define evangelicalism will always remain somewhat imprecise because the phenomenon designated by the word represents a set of beliefs and practices rather than a single organization.¹

The encounter of the colonial imperial government and the missionaries with Africans altered the African social imagination both for better and for worse and continues to do so.² The fact that the Christian Church was introduced in Africa alongside colonial administration made it a continuing site for decolonial methodologies. Humphrey Waweru cites that during the church's inception in Africa, it was difficult to differentiate between the missionaries from the colonial masters.³ In the vernacular it was commonly said, "*gutire ngurani ya mubea na muthungu*," meaning that the work and broader intentions of the missionaries seemed to align with those of the colonial masters. Consequently, the continuing grip of colonialism on the African Church still bequeaths the church with a colonially-tinted vision which cannot be underestimated. Assumably, this grip is only noticeable and addressed from the perspective of the mainstream churches. However, if put under tight scrutiny, much of what transacts as church practices in Africa today can be revealed largely as products of entanglement with theological conditioning of colonial encounter and continuing neo-Western socialization. There are many colonial baggages that color the contemporary African evangelical church including governance and rituals, etc. This article uses postcolonial criticism to argue that colonial legacies in biblical interpretation and liturgical formulations have had theological functions on contemporary African evangelicalism. Theological functions such as othering and elitism limit theologizing and hence hinder realization of a truly contextual and Evangelical African faith. In this article, the purported theological functions are critiqued and options suggested for a proper alignment of the label "evangelical" to African biblical perspectives rather than colonial dimensions. Paths for a deepened Evangelical Christianity in Africa are also discussed and proposed.

A WORD ON THE POSTCOLONIAL METHOD

Since its inception more than two decades ago, postcolonial criticism has quickly gained traction as a useful interpretative grid in Africa.⁴ However, many African evangelicals have treated

1 Mark Noll, "Defining Evangelicalism," in *Global Evangelicalism: Theology, History and Culture in Regional Perspective*, edited by Donald M. Lewis and Richard V. Pierard (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2014), 24.

2 Jacob Samuel Kimathi, *Re-Imagining Theology for Postcolonial Africa: A Case of the Kenyan Akurimu Church* (Phoenixville, PA: Borderless Press, 2023), 69 – 71.

3 Humphrey Waweru, *African Theology in a Postcolonial Perspective* (Limuru: Franciscan Kolbe Press, 2020), 110 – 113.

4 Postcolonial colonial biblical criticism means many things to different readers. It is used in this article in an evangelical framework as an important tool for scrutinizing discourses of the colonized and colonizers embedded in ancient texts and their interpretations. I use it to review discourses of the dominant and powerful as they are embodied in biblical texts and in

postcolonial methodologies with suspicion given their “hermeneutics of suspicion” approach to the text and therefore have shielded their analysis from what may be useful insights. My use of evangelical postcolonial analyses in this article is guided by Kay Higuera Smith,⁵ who views the postcolonial approach as a useful tool for evangelicals. Though postcolonialism is not so much a theory as it is a criticism, its major usefulness is its adoption of a critical stance in favor of those suppressed in colonial and postcolonial circumstances. As Smith observes, the criticism generates “counterdiscursive practices” that correct and undo any hegemony and its effects on society. Postcolonial criticism is a broad concept and, therefore, this paper does not employ every aspect of it.

While postcolonial theories and theologies attempt to decolonize the remnants of Western hegemony, their interrogations of evangelicalism are important for two reasons. On the one hand, Western evangelicals are implicated in many of the ways that they aided colonial powers to rationalize the dehumanization of native populations. Further, through these machinations, they helped create native elites in the religious spaces. These native elites through their mimicking of colonial models in their own mission strategies are now the champions of evangelicalism; despite being retainers of theological baggage.

Owing to this, therefore, yes, evangelicals do need postcolonialism and postcolonial scholars can be evangelical. To be an evangelical committed to Jesus is to recognize that Jesus was an indigenous peasant/subaltern whose message critiqued imperial and hegemonic theologies that oppressed the masses and also the local elites who were its retainers. Commitment to Jesus through a renewed affirmation of his humanness, along with his divinity, therefore, compels evangelicals to critique the imperial structures of both the ancient and contemporary worlds. Postcolonial analyses are used in this article to listen for mimicry, ambivalence,⁶ and hybridity as words highlighted by Homi Bhabha which reveal how identities are formed in an evangelical space. As a critical tool, postcolonialism is also used to listen for othering which further explains the subtle identity formation and its regularization. The postcolonial methodology involves an exercise of imagination in retrieval of submerged identities, subversion of hegemonic dominance, which in turn enables the subaltern⁷ to speak and thus opening up space for contextual appropriations of evangelicalism in local spaces.

EVANGELICALISM IN AFRICA

Much of Evangelical Christianity in Africa emerged from or was influenced by Western missionary Christianity. The theology and “Christian practices/culture” imparted by the missionaries often carried certain assumptions about Africans and African spiritualities, morality, and religious practices. In turn, to Africans were added beliefs upon their existing beliefs. This “baggage” included the ways in which Western missionaries interpreted and taught Christianity, which could sometimes be at odds with or blend awkwardly with local beliefs and practices. The period of European colonization in Africa brought significant changes to African societies, including the introduction of Christianity by European missionaries. This had a profound impact on religious practices and the structure of Christian communities in Africa. There were cultural impositions whereby colonial

interpretations and to imagine evangelical friendly hermeneutics.

5 Kay Higuera Smith, Jayachitra Lalitha, and L. Daniel Hawk, eds., *Evangelical Postcolonial Conversations: Global Awakenings in Theology and Praxis* (Westmont: InterVarsity Press, 2014).

6 Adapted into colonial discourse theory by Homi Bhabha, “ambivalence” describes the complex mix of attraction and repulsion that characterizes the relationship between colonizer and colonized. The relationship is ambivalent because the colonized subject is never simply and completely opposed to the colonizer. Rather than assuming that some colonized subjects are “complicit” and some “resistant,” ambivalence suggests that complicity and resistance exist in a fluctuating relation within the colonial subject. Ambivalence also characterizes the way in which colonial discourse relates to the colonized subject, for it may be both exploitative and nurturing, or represent itself as nurturing, at the same time. See Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, *Post-colonial Studies: The Key Concepts*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2007), 10.

7 In postcolonial studies the term “subaltern” is adopted by Antonio Gramsci to refer to those groups in society who are subject to the hegemony of the ruling classes. Subaltern classes may include peasants, workers, and other groups denied access to “hegemonic” power and therefore, the term can be used generically to refer to the masses living in the margins as opposed to few at the center. See Ashcroft, ed., et.al, *Post-colonial Studies*, 198.

powers often imposed their own cultural values and religious practices on African societies. This imposition sometimes marginalized or undermined local religious traditions and practices, leading to a complex interaction between indigenous beliefs and the newly introduced Christianity.

Consequently, there were pockets of resistance as Africans adapted to the new norm. In response to colonial pressures, some African Christians often adapted and transformed Christian practices to assert their identity and autonomy. Evangelicalism with its emphasis on personal salvation and biblical authority became a significant vehicle for this resistance and adaptation. It offered a way for Africans to express their faith in ways that resonated with their own cultural experiences.

THE “WAVES” OF AFRICAN EVANGELICALISM

To illustrate this, I have analyzed initial African evangelicalism into four waves. The first wave, which began in the mid-1990s was descriptive and idealistic. Christianity was described for Africans through Bible interpretations, missionary-mediated forms of worship, liturgies, hymns, etc. In this phase, mimicking missionaries/missionization was considered a progressive cultural shift.

The second wave, which I would call “denominationalizing” considered the diversity of missionary religious packages in terms of denominations. Missionary denominations carried with them national ideologies and sometimes ethnic affiliations of the missionaries, which in turn reflected on how these missionaries interpreted Christianity for the Africans through their own cultural perspectives. The practice of denominations further complicated the African scene, because it contributed to identity formations, othering, and toning down of the African value of communalism.

In the third wave, which I term the “interpretative” wave, Christian content received more theoretical and interpretive inquiry through African lenses. Whereas this happened mostly in already forming and norming African churches, African scholarship can be seen in its attempts to interpret theological frameworks so as to analyze lived realities of African Christian communities.

The fourth wave, represents the contemporary appropriations of evangelicalism. In this phase, the meaning of evangelicalism is snatched from mainline denominations⁸ and ascribed to revivalism which is mostly housed in Pentecostals and charismatics churches – in a wave that passed through Africa in the 1970s. Formations of evangelical alliances is seen and, in Kenya, for example, the evangelical alliance body admittedly housed many denominations and ministries which may not have been necessarily strictly evangelical. As a result, there is lack of uniformity in theology and practice even in the definition of who is an evangelical. The evangelical alliance in Kenya, for example, does not necessarily represent churches of the same theological persuasions. Currently, there is a growing emphasis that mainline denominations are no longer evangelical.⁹

BEING AN EVANGELICAL IN AFRICA

As has already been noted, to be an evangelical in Africa is to accept that the label “evangelical” is so broad and globalized and thus contains the potentialities of hegemonizing the other. Being an evangelical in Africa is a complex identity. This identity is informed by colonialism and by Africanity. Readers may have heard of John Mbiti’s description of Africans and their notoriety in Religion.¹⁰ In his *African Religions and Philosophy*, Mbiti makes the argument that has remained quite popular in Africa that “Africans are notoriously religious.” This notoriety permeates not only Christianity (in all its forms and manifestations) but also other religions present in Africa as well. Therefore, in terms of devotion to Christianity, it would be easier to ask who is not an evangelical in Africa; instead of asking who is an evangelical in Africa. It should be noted that, even though evangelicalism in Africa came through colonialism, African evangelicals have worked hard to navigate, integrate, and

8 While many evangelicals are to be found within “mainline” denominations that are not self-consciously evangelical.

9 See Beth Ann Williams, “Mainline Churches: Networks of Belonging in Postindependence Kenya and Tanzania,” *Journal of Religion in Africa* 48:3 (2018): 255-285. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/26869755.pdf>.

10 John Mbiti, *African Religion and Philosophy*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Heinemann Educational Publishers, 1999), 1.

accommodate evangelicalism.¹¹

David Bebbington's well known quadrilateral characterization of the evangelicals as Biblicist, cross-centered, conversionists, and activists cannot well capture who an evangelical is in Africa.¹² When it comes to biblicism, I have the following to say. The Bible is a site of struggle in Africa. There is an ambivalent approach to the authority of the Bible because it is questioned and accepted at the same time. In the first wave of encounter outlined above, Africans had mediated readings of the Bible with the result of representation. In this phase, native peoples can either be categorized as complicit or resistant to colonial religious mediation. Biblical illiteracy abounded and there was overreliance on missionaries for mediating biblical authority, personal faith, and Christian growth. However, when some initial missionaries exhibited moral and behavioral deficiencies which was quickly noticeable among the initial converts and in turn undercut the primacy of biblical authority among African recipients. In the initial contacts Africans could not appropriate the Bible for themselves and had to rely on missionary readings and interpretations. Biblical interpretations were seen to endorse colonialism, slavery, apartheid, and varied corrupt practices and therefore then and now the question remains, which Bible should Africans hold as infallible.

An answer came when Bible translations set in, and, as Africans begin to read the Bible and sometimes in African languages, there was an emergence of African hermeneutics. This wave represented the ability of Africans not only to read the Bible but also to interpret it. Many versions of vernacular interpretations have become available today and "God can now speak in our language." Emergence of liberation hermeneutics is an off-shoot of this scenario. Emergence of liberation theologies in the twentieth century exposed how evangelical theologies had failed to address various social justice issues that challenged scriptural and ecclesiastical prerogatives. Ability of some missionary readings to align with apartheid, some forms of colonialism, and slavery in Africa meant that Christianity as projected by few albeit influential evangelical missionaries gradually lost some of its credibility.¹³ The Bible was used to support many evils and, therefore, Africa has not had adequate answers/solutions to issues which culture had, perhaps, had more adequate solutions to. Therefore, evangelical missionaries' insistence on reading the Bible in their styles in African contexts created "un-expected spaces" that turned the gaze. Being an evangelical in Africa, therefore, means that the Bible must be read in manners that aid a people in struggle. Meaning is properly construed not in a text waiting for its meaning to be discovered but in a reader-text interaction.¹⁴

CONVERSIONISTS

Evangelical Christianity was marked by a strong tendency to convert others by those who were converted.¹⁵ The version of mission Evangelical Christianity emphasized this dimension of salvation. Salvation was individualist and the Bible was used to support this theology. Portions like Ezekiel 18

11 The relationship between evangelicalism as an offshoot of missionary Christianity cannot be overstated. Contextual enrichments have made evangelical expressions more at home in Africa.

12 David W Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (Oxford: Taylor & Francis Group, 1989).

13 The field of biblical hermeneutics has been crowded with debates on the differences between hermeneutics of trust and hermeneutics of suspicion. Hermeneutics of trust which are not necessarily hermeneutics of faith major on reading within the text without any need for historical background or in-front of the text perusal. The Bible is read as the word of God speaking with immediacy to the reader. On the other side, hermeneutics of suspicion which are also not necessarily hermeneutics of faith refer to readers who acknowledge inherent difficulties in reading some portions of the Bible. These readers ask critical questions in order to understand the text. The missionary reading alluded to here refers to hermeneutics of trust that are afraid of critical engagement with the text. My proposal for evangelical readers is in whichever perspective to read the text but include the perspective of faith that mediates criticality.

14 Text-reader-interaction is a complex and dynamic activity that involves discerning how a reader's context and pre-understanding shape the meaning of the text. See also Joanne M. Golden, "Text-Reader Interaction: Theory into Practice," *Building Literacy* 25.2 (2205), 91-96.

15 David Gitari, "Evangelization and Culture: Primary Evangelism in Northern Kenya," in *Proclaiming Christ in Christ's Ways: Studies in Integral Mission*, edited by Vinay Samuel and Albrecht Hauser (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1989), 102 – 121.

were taken off their exegetical parameters to support the evangelical claim that “the soul that sinneth is the one that shall die.”¹⁶ Overemphasis on personal salvation has had its drawbacks in Africa. It has not, for example, aided buttressing of *ubuntu*¹⁷ through a biblical/Christian perspective. David Gitari¹⁸ gives a good example when he narrates how the Anglican Church in Kenya took its mission to the Rendille and Boran people of northern Kenya where it encountered several difficulties in its evangelistic approach. The Rendille and Boran people of Kenya are a nomadic closed community. The elders are the community gate keepers and nothing enters or leaves the community without their notice and approval. The community must be kept in unity and guarded from any foreign intrusions. Without understanding this dynamic, then, it would be difficult to penetrate or even find acceptance in the community. Among the nomadic communities of Kenya, one cannot go “door-to-door,” or “person-to-person,” while evangelizing. This is seen as separating the community and introducing divisions. You must convince the gate keepers of the community who are the elders and, once they are convinced with your “product,” then they tell the community to accept it. The community approach is so strong that even doing business requires models that have a communalistic approach. For example, since they are a nomadic community, no brand of veterinary medicine is acceptable for their livestock unless it has been approved by the elders. Veterinary companies that do not understand this dynamic cannot make inroads in the community. And this goes for all products. Gitari records that this was the initial mistake that the Anglican Church in Kenya made in its attempt to start churches among the Boran. It failed in several attempts to start an Anglican church among the Rendille and Boran people of Kenya till it understood the logic of evangelizing closed communities.

From a postcolonial perspective, this approach poses a challenge to the theology of personal salvation that evangelicalism upholds. Identity formation in a personalized theology of salvation poses a challenge to a lived theology of an entire community where God is viewed as one who unites as opposed to one who divides. Sin is also seen in broader categories of honor and shame than merely in categories of right and wrong. The communalistic model incorporates a broader cosmic approach to salvation. It is either all of us are saved or none of us is saved. Othering is highly discouraged in such communities. Since sin is not viewed in terms of right and wrong but in terms of honor and shame, individuals, therefore, live to meet expectations of an honorable community. If Jesus is not presented as able to save the whole community, then the message is outrightly rejected. Studies have shown that, where the gospel has been appropriated based on a communalistic approach, the community has exhibited tendencies of “abundant” life rather than where individuals have accepted Christ without the community.¹⁹ Although, not unique to the evangelical method of overemphasis on personal salvation, evangelicals have a well-documented history of engaging with binary identity construction. Sadly, this identity construction relies on skewed readings of Scripture that are not representative of Christ. Mark Noll also sees this perspective as normalizing a theology of otherness, and an acceleration of difference.²⁰

THE EAST AFRICAN REVIVAL²¹

Up to now, what I have drawn is a picture of evangelical Christianity in Africa. I now illustrate a contrast with a brief narration of the East Africa revival. The East African revival is famous because of its attempts to change the climate of evangelicalism in East Africa. After a first generation in the Churches devoted to catechism drill and grind, in the 1930s, African Christians were unexpectedly

16 Ezekiel 18:20 KJV.

17 According to Mojola, “...among the Bantu speaking people and communities of Africa, Ubuntu has to do with the essence of what it means to be human, what really makes humans human.” See also Mjola, *Utu/Ubuntu & Community: Reimagining & Celebrating the Web of Life and the Dignity and Worth of All Humans* (Nairobi: Tafsiri Press, BTL, 2022), 5. *Ubuntu* goes beyond conceptual status to expressions of that humanity in interactions with human world and creation.

18 Gitari, “Evangelization and Culture,” in *Proclaiming Christ*, 110.

19 See Vinay Samuel and Albrecht Hauser, eds., *Proclaiming Christ in Christ's Way*.

20 Noll, “Defining Evangelicalism,” 15-33.

21 Kevin Ward, “Introduction,” in *The East African Revival*, 3.

hit by a transforming inspiration. Bengt and Steed argue that the low Church Anglicans (the CMS), Methodists, Presbyterians, Lutherans were all radically transformed by this evangelical infusion and brought together in a warm “Fellowship.”²² The revival, which began in Ruanda, stood firmly and decisively for a conservative evangelical theological position with regard to the Bible, promoting an urgent quest for renewal and personal holiness as understood within the parameters of the Keswick movement.²³ The revival had a great focus on sin and repentance, the Cross, the baptism of the Spirit, sanctification, and the quest for holiness. Unlike the missionary Christianity, it had a very distinctive African feel about it, not least because it was the African leaders who provided the energy, the intellectual and emotional dynamic.²⁴ Moral probity was part and parcel of the revival and “Leaving” was a term frequently used in the discourse on sin. It indicated the transformative qualities of the Revival by its insistence on dispensing with previous behavior and assuming a new ethic and a new set of relationships.²⁵

Although the movement no longer appears as distinct or as robust as it did in the 1930s or the 1960s, the revival became effective because it presented a Christianity that overcame local issues and transcended cultural differences and denominationalism, which were issues already problematized by initial preachings of Christianity.²⁶ It also presented an illustration not only of revivalism as a response to waning evangelical authority in the transacting churches, but it overcame some challenges already introduced by missionaries. However, it was not able fully to undo all the theological baggage. In fact, it introduced more “burdens” to Christian life so that it became its own burden. In Swahili, revivalists came to be known as *wakiristo wa mizigo* – meaning “they had more baggage of their own to carry.”

EVANGELICALISM IN AFRICA AND CONTEMPORARY ISSUES

The initial language of theological baggage comes to play here. It refers to the set of beliefs and practices that individuals or groups carry with them from their religious or cultural backgrounds that may not accurately capture a community’s theological aspirations and expressions. In the context of African evangelicalism, this can include the inherited theological concepts from earlier missionaries or local religious traditions that are no longer in tandem with lived progressive and interpretative realities.

For example, African evangelical Christianity grapples with a theology of worship. There are many and diverse liturgical expressions in Africa today. These liturgies not only express richness and creative diversity but also theological poverty through their untheological expressions. Liturgical expressions in Africa can be divided into categories; those evangelical and those that are not evangelical – commonly referred to as merely “religious.” Those perceived and labelled as merely religious prefer hymns instead of choruses. Singing of hymns or choruses contributes to the labelling of who is evangelical and who is not with mostly African Christians who prefer hymns being branded un-evangelical. The issues of written or extemporaneous prayers, written or spontaneous sermons and preaching also forms a basis for othering and branding. Indigenization of worship and mimicking of modern styles of worship also goes into the definition of who is evangelical and who is not. This creates a situation where elite evangelicals who are natural products of modern day Pentecostalism now become the new gatekeepers of the community of faith and in turn reserve the rights to new models of constructing evangelical identity.

Although both – the formal and the more relaxed persuasions in worship – do not differ in core doctrines, there is othering as an offshoot of colonial evangelicalism which cannot be avoided. In postcolonial terms, this involves creating a division between “us” (the insiders, the chosen, the saved)

22 Bengt Sundkler and Christopher Steed, *A History of the Church in Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 864.

23 Kevin Ward, “The Revival in an African Milieu,” in *The East African Revival*, 201.

24 Ward, “The East African Revival,” in *The East African Revival*, 203.

25 Esther Mombo, “The Revival Testimony of Second Wives,” in *The East African Revival*, 157.

26 Ward, “Introduction,” in *The East African Revival*, 3.

and “them” (the outsiders, the lost, the heathen). This dynamic is often rooted in colonial frameworks that sought to define and dominate the religious and cultural “other.” Elitism also as toleration of hierarchy within the faith community, where certain theological interpretations, leaders, or practices are regarded as superior abounds. This reflects a colonial mentality where imperialized modes of worship or theological understanding are viewed as more “advanced” or “civilized.” Further, effects of othering go on to house hegemonizing remnants in theology which in turn can hinder ecumenism and maintain structures of exclusion, preventing a fuller, more inclusive expression of Christianity that is deeply rooted in African space.

WHICH WAY AFRICAN EVANGELICALISM?

One of the challenges put before evangelicals who embrace postcoloniality is to ask how postcolonial models offer new ways of constructing identities so as to avoid the colonial limitations of binarism, mimicry, and objectifying strategies among others. Whereas decolonizing imperial theological baggage is a dynamic and complex exercise, African evangelicalism can posture in religious innovation and resistance that addresses the social, economic, and spiritual needs of its adherents while also negotiating the complicated histories of colonialism and Western missionary activity in Africa. This process involves both continuity and change, as African evangelicalism both inherits and transforms the legacies of the past.

To think about maintaining an authentic African theology that constructs the identity of African evangelicals in a way that is ethical and that avoids the pitfalls of “othering,” I suggest three approaches that can be implemented at the social, institutional, and ecclesiological levels: (1) that African evangelicals interrogate and change how theology informs construction of power, including how objectification of others takes place – this involves using concepts like *ubuntu* whose teachings align with the Christian gospel; (2) that African evangelicals develop forms of communality that collectively and consciously work to involve others at all levels of the social spectrum. This involves preaching a gospel that pays attention to social holiness and social justice in Africa; and (3) that African evangelicals explore the social memories of the othered and seek to uncover the conscious social “forgetting” of others’ stories within our own cultural narratives.²⁷ This involves telling and preserving the stories of all Africans that have contributed immensely to the propagation of the gospel. A great example of this is the work of the African Christian Biography project.²⁸

In so far as the first approach is concerned, Evangelical Christianity in Africa has a task of deepening contextual theologies that exist. Most contextual theologies that exist in Africa build on the unique cultural, historical, and social contexts of her believers. What has not been deepened is the interpretation of the Bible and Christian doctrines in ways that resonate with African worldviews, values, and experiences. Instead of uncritically adopting imperial and hegemonic theological frameworks, African theologians and church leaders need to explore how biblical teachings intersect with African traditions, customs, and community life. This will mean deliberate reinscribing by reimagining Christian symbols, rituals, and narratives to make them more relevant and meaningful in African contexts. A great deal of an African methodology for biblical interpretation is presented in Elizabeth Mburu’s book on *African Hermeneutics*.²⁹ Mburu presents the African four legged stool as a model for interpreting the Bible. This model takes care of the historical background, the literary context, the African context, and the theological context.

In the second approach, a deepened Evangelical Christianity in Africa must actively work to decolonize theology and church practices. This means critically examining and dismantling the remnants of colonial influence that still lingers in how Christianity is taught, practiced, and understood. For instance, it involves challenging elitist structures within the church that mirror

27 Kay Higuera Smith, “Embracing the Other: A Vision for Evangelical Identity,” in *Evangelical Postcolonial Conversations*, 177.

28 Dana L Robert ed., *African Christian Biography* (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 2018).

29 See Elizabeth Mburu, *African Hermeneutics* (Plateau State, Nigeria: Hippo Books, 2019), 65-80.

colonial hierarchies in church governance structures and questioning theological teachings that implicitly promote othering based on cultural superiority. For example, in the debates on same sex marriages and “inclusivity” clamoring, African Christians must carve out a space that represents African sexual and marital norms that are consistent with African Christian understandings of marital egalitarianism. Contemporary re-emergence of African cultural superiority should not be permitted to undercut the gains of African Christian teachings on marriage which mostly align with the teachings of the Bible.

Third, to heal social memories of othered Christians and communities in Africa, evangelical Christianity in Africa also requires a strong emphasis on social justice and community transformation. Many contemporary African societies face significant challenges, including poverty, inequality, corruption, and conflict. In the olden days, African tradition religions emphasized concepts of *ubuntu* that ensured equitable distribution of wealth and care for the poor. A truly contextualized and deep evangelical Christianity would not only focus on individual salvation but also on the transformation of society. This involves advocating for justice, peace, and the common good, rooted in the biblical call to love one’s neighbor and seek the welfare of the community. By addressing social and economic issues, the church can play a vital role in healing and rebuilding African societies.

Finally, a decolonized evangelical Christianity in Africa will not settle at its own level in terms of social change. Evangelicals in Africa must face the reality of other faiths in Africa thus engage a theology that preserves Christian identity in communities that are increasingly becoming multireligious and multicultural. How are evangelical Christians supposed to behave in the face of religious radicalization and current debates on methodologies of interfaith relations? This article cannot offer a full statement on evangelical positioning in multireligious and multicultural contexts. However, my encouragement to evangelical Christians is to adopt a posture that encourages cooperation with a view to convert. It is upon each evangelical person or community to design their own parameters of cooperation but ultimately any cooperation done should lead to conversion.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, deepening Evangelical Christianity in Africa will involve continued upholding of the core mission of Evangelicalism, in other words, sharing the good news of Jesus Christ in ways that promote *ubuntu* and are community-based. Towards this end, evangelicals in Africa will require a balance between spiritual growth, social engagement, and communal transformation. Evangelical Christianity in Africa must be wholistic, embracing all aspects of life, including family, work, and civic engagement, reflecting love, justice, and the holiness of God.

The Rev. Dr. Julius Kithinji is a senior Lecturer and Dean of the School of Theology at St. Paul’s University in Limuru, Kenya. He is a council member at the Presbyterian University of East Africa where he chairs the Academics and Statues committee. Kithinji’s expertise is in biblical studies where he specializes in the New Testament. His interests in interpreting the Bible from evangelical postcolonial perspectives count for many of his publications and supervision of students at masters and doctoral levels. He is an ordained minister serving with the Methodist Church in Kenya.

The Quest for Gender Equity in Leadership

Biblical Teachings on Gender Equity and Illustrations of Transformation in Africa

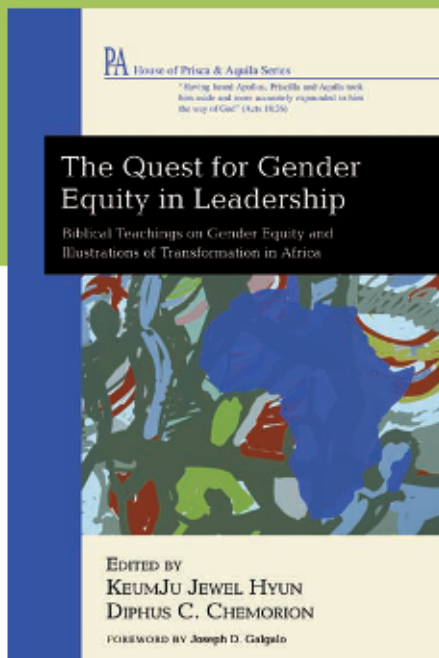
EDITED BY **KEUMJU JEWEL HYUN**
& **DIPHUS C. CHEMORION**

FOREWORD BY **Joseph D. Galgala**

The call for gender equity in leadership has become a global concern. From a Christian perspective, all forms of gender prejudice are sinful because they violate God's intention for creating both men and women in God's image. Although many Christian authors have published books and journal articles to address gender-based injustice, very few publications have approached the subject from an African perspective. This book is meant to fill the existing gap. With a specific reference to the African context, this book explores the phenomenon of equity in leadership from various dimensions, such as African culture and traditional religion, church tradition, biblical interpretation, as well as from the perspective of contemporary socio-economic and political realities in Africa. By giving vivid examples of success stories of men and women working together, the authors have demythologized the view that women cannot be leaders. In addition, this book is intended for general readership by Christian men and women throughout the globe. For universities and colleges that teach gender studies as a subject, the book can serve as a class text or reference resource. Seminaries and theological institutions will also find it handy for training and mentoring Christians to promote equity in the church, ministry, business, and family.

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"The Quest for Biblical Equity in Leadership is good biblical scholarship and engaging story-telling from a fresh African perspective that will provide new insights to readers from any continent."

—BRAD SMITH, President, Bakke Graduate University

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—MARY EVANS, Author, Former Vice-Principal and Old Testament lecturer, London School of Theology

"I have witnessed first-hand how Jewel Hyun embodies the quest for Biblical equity in leadership in Africa. Her faith-filled ministry in Kenya is a wonder to behold, and transformational to experience. As a result, the book in your hands is filled with Biblical wisdom and practical implications that will stand the test of time."

—STEPHEN A. MACCHIA, Author, Founder and President, Leadership Transformations, Inc.

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Review of *Why Evangelical Theology Needs the Global Church* by Stephen T. Pardue (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2023)

LAURA CHEVALIER BEER

Stephen T. Pardue writes *Why Evangelical Theology Needs the Global Church* for evangelical theologians and students of theology throughout the world. Starting with the well-known premise “that the church is no longer primarily rooted in North America and Europe but increasingly comprises people from an astonishing variety of cultures and nations,” he asks how this reality has and should affect the practice of evangelical theology (1). Pardue’s resounding answer is that all evangelicals must engage with culture in their theological reflection not just because the church is becoming more and more diverse, but because it is a biblical mandate, a divinely appointed theological task. Throughout the work, he details the care and study with which such a task must be undertaken. Pardue makes the case that contextual theologies, theologies that “intentionally make use of local cultures and languages,” are important resources for the global church (37, 4). While he mostly writes to encourage Western evangelicals to dialogue more fully with theological contributions from Asia, Africa, and Latin America, his work also invites increased engagement in the global church by evangelical theologians from the Global South and ethnic minority populations who may tend to focus solely on their localities.

Pardue is an American evangelical theologian who has spent three-quarters of his life living, ministering, and teaching in the Philippines. He currently directs the ThM/PhD in Theological Studies and Church History at the Asia Graduate School of Theology and teaches theology at the International Graduate School of Leadership in Manila, Philippines. As a sojourner, not fully an insider in any culture, Pardue’s life experience has given him many opportunities for friendship and dialogue across cultural boundaries (11). Therefore, he is well situated to tackle the task of building theological bridges in spaces where there has often been skepticism and distrust.

Drawing on extensive literature in church history, missiology, global Christianity, and theology, as well as case studies, Pardue gives the reader an introduction and path forward for a constructive evangelical approach to contextual theologies. He develops his argument in six chapters bookended by an introduction and conclusion. The introduction lays out the purpose, as stated above, and the organization of the work.

Chapter 1 explores why evangelicals have tended to ignore or reject contextual theology. The objections that Pardue raises directly relate to fears that a focus on culture can erode evangelical biblical commitments. Some objectors go so far as to suggest that the Bible should be studied objectively and operate independently of culture, while others, fearing syncretism, advocate for keeping culture’s impact minimal (15-16, 19-23). Other more nuanced evangelical objectors, according to Pardue, allow culture to help “apply and express theology,” or make it understandable (26). However, these advocates of contextualizing the gospel message often do not think culture should be used in creating contextual theologies because they fear doctrinal discontinuity and cultural fragmentation (29). With appreciation for what each objection can teach the evangelical theologian about safeguarding the unique authority of the Bible, Pardue concludes with Lesslie Newbigin that “the gospel is always culturally conditioned” (31-32). He suggests that no theologies will ever provide a full, objective picture of God, but they present the possibility of adding new vantage points from which to gain an increased understanding. Pardue calls this approach a “chastened ‘theological science,’” where there is acknowledgment of one’s inability to set aside one’s culture and be completely objective (32-33). Ultimately, says Pardue, acknowledging that God chooses to operate in and through cultures and at the same time is above all of them is key to understanding and contributing to theology that is both contextual and for the church universal.

In the remaining five chapters, Pardue proposes five theses that build on each other to provide a rationale for evangelical theological dialogue across cultures. He provides case studies of contextual theologies from around the globe in each chapter to illustrate his points further and “demonstrate what such dialogue looks like” (9-10). In Chapter 2, he presents a brief history of the development of contextual theologies since the 1970s among Catholics, Protestants, and evangelicals, highlighting various terms used. Then he puts forth his first of five theses, focusing on the distinctives of evangelical approaches to contextual theologies. He emphasizes the importance of looking to Scripture as the “magisterial authority” in the theological task even with an increased “appreciation for the crucial ministerial role of culture” (52). He acknowledges that there is still difficulty in enacting his position, and it is only through the power of the Holy Spirit illuminating our minds that contextual theologies can remain faithful to the Bible. For the first case study, Pardue highlights the work of René Padilla, an Ecuadorian theologian who was the primary articulator of integral mission, a contextual theology from Latin America. Integral mission emerged out of the same socio-political environment that birthed liberation theologies, and each emphasized the importance of justice and care for the poor. Integral mission remained grounded in the authority and power of the Bible and led to the emergence of a spiritually vital community of believers who continue to attend to the practical needs in their localities (58-61).

Chapter 3 is an in-depth look at culture. The premise is that engagement with culture is not only inevitable but is also an important part of the theological task. Therefore, Pardue argues that evangelical contextual theologies must acknowledge that culture is a good gift from God to be used for the benefit of the church (63-64). Pardue uses the chapter to look at what culture means theologically, emphasizing its changing and overlapping nature. He looks at various biblical accounts from Babel to Revelation to show how culture is both “the site of human corruption and rebellion, but also God’s redemptive work, which does not abolish but perfects cultural distinctives” (89). Pardue presents the thought of Carver T. Yu, a Chinese evangelical theologian based in Hong Kong whose work engages the landscape of present-day China and the Confucian tradition. Yu shows how there are gifts in Confucian thought that can provide evangelicals with a greater appreciation for the communal aspect of faith. At the same time, Yu critiques the same tradition for its lack of an understanding of human depravity (85-89).

In Chapter 4, Pardue focuses on the need for a “doctrinal anchor” to guide the process of contextual theological reflection that is true to the gospel message which is for all people and yet is expressed in diverse cultural contexts. He argues that the biblical vision of the church is the best theological model for grounding contextual theologies in the concepts of unity and diversity. A faithful ecclesiology that includes the eschatological vision of people from every tribe, language, and nation gathered around Christ’s throne in worship is the best anchor for the “project of contextual theology” (93). However, before focusing on the doctrine of the church, he first examines other concepts that are sometimes used to “ground the church’s attention to the gifts of cultural diversity and particularity” (93). They include the process of globalization, the Trinity, and the incarnation. For the case study, Pardue introduces Simon Chan, a Singaporean theologian. Chan has reflected extensively on Asian contextual theologies. According to Pardue, Chan contends that focusing on what the Spirit is doing in the church can correct some of the unhelpful methodologies that others have used in shaping their contextual theologies. Often Asian theologians have focused on differentiating their thought from Western thought or on what is going on in the socio-political environment. Instead, Chan calls for professional theologians to renew their focus on the church. Pardue mentions three key ecclesial issues facing the church in Asia that Chan raises in his work—the church’s relationship to the world’s major religions, challenges of an individualized faith in a collectivist context, and ancestral veneration (107-113).

Pardue moves his argument of the need to heed the global church forward in Chapter 5 by examining the doctrine of the church further, especially its catholicity. He argues that a response to

contextual theologies that safeguards against cultural relativism is to reject contextual theologies that do not engage the worldwide church (116-117). Taking the four characteristics of the church in the Nicene Creed as his starting point, he places his analysis of catholicity alongside unity and after an examination of holiness and apostolicity. Key features of catholicity that he draws out are wholeness and fullness (129-135). The case study for this chapter focuses on Christology from Latin American and Global perspectives. Pardue mentions features of various Christologies around the world and then highlights the work of Puerto Rican theologian Jules Martinex-Olivieri. According to Pardue, Martinex-Olivieri is a “primary example of theology done with an unswerving focus on the substantive contributions of local theology set alongside a commitment to bringing these insights into conversation with the concerns of the worldwide church” (139). Much like liberation theologies from the region, Martinex-Olivieri’s Christology looks at the transformative power of Christ, but situations it “within a classical trinitarian framework,” “engagement with the whole Council of Scripture and the fullness of the Christian tradition, past and present” (138).

In Chapter 6, Pardue brings his argument to a climax by looking at the role of the historical church, the “great cloud of witnesses,” in the task of contextual theology. His thesis is that “evangelical contextual theologies should engage the Great Tradition of the church, finding there a rich treasury to support contemporary renewal as well as a community that helps prevent slavish obedience to the theological present” (142). Pardue begins the chapter by summarizing a thought experiment by Andrew Walls in which he envisions a Martian walking into a Christian church at different points in history. Such a visitor would observe many discontinuities among the various congregations and some continuities. Pardue then notes the difficulty that some evangelicals have with church tradition—they often see it as a baggage that must be disentangled from the gospel for the Christian message to be understood. Despite acknowledging the mistakes of past generations of Christians, Pardue makes the case that the Christian tradition is another resource that can help safeguard contextual theologies. It is another feature of true universality (151). A call to engage the Great Tradition in one’s theologizing is a corrective both for conservative evangelicals who want to jump from first-century Christianity to the present and theologians from Asia, Africa, and Latin America who wish to dismantle Christianity from its colonial past (146-150). Pardue explains how some theologians are beginning to construct theologies of retrieval in which they mine the theological resources of the historic church to help in the present. The final case study features the work of Kwame Bediako, a Ghanaian theologian and church historian. Bediako’s faith and scholarly journeys included studying second-century Christians as a way to find resources for engagement with twentieth-century African Christianity (160-65). Pardue concludes with a summary of his book and its aim of promoting an appreciation for culture while maintaining “evangelical commitments” (170).

The organization of Pardue’s argument and the humility with which he offers a critique of other perspectives are effective in leading the reader to consider his conclusions. Similar to Chapter 1, throughout his work, he progressively works through objections, describes various approaches to a concept, and then proposes an alternative, always with an eye to what differing perspectives can still teach.¹ Such an approach invites readers, even those who may disagree with him, to remain open to new perspectives. His fair treatment of theologians from streams of Christianity outside evangelicalism gives evidence of his desire to learn and provides the reader with an example of the very kind of theological dialogue he is promoting.²

Pardue’s ability to integrate texts that will be familiar to serious students and scholars in their separate disciplines and fields and introduce them to those outside their domains is a key

1 See for example, his treatment of the various approaches to grounding contextual theologies in the concept of unity and diversity (93-105).

2 See for example, his treatment of liberation theologians (54-57).

feature of his work. He demonstrates expertise in many of the foundational texts and ideas of theology, church history, missiology, and global Christianity. As he points out in making the case for collaboration in theological reflection, it can be hard to find such skill in one person (166). Therefore, his ability to work with depth and breadth across disciplines and fields of study is impressive. Missiologists will appreciate the skill with which he covers the history of Catholic and Protestant approaches to inculturation, indigenization, contextual theology, and contextualization, and his reliance on such well-known names as Robert J. Schreiter, Stephen B. Bevans, and A. Scott Moreau (38, 43-46). The case study of integral mission in Latin America is an important inclusion as well as the theological dialogue regarding the place of ancestors in African Christologies (58-61, 135-37). Pardue's familiarity with early Christian texts as well as contemporary historians of evangelicalism and global Christianity was helpful. Scholars of global Christianity will value how he shines the spotlight on the work of Andrew Walls, Kwame Bediako, and Mark Noll (142-46, 160-65, 125-26). Theologians will also see familiar names like Karl Barth and Paul Tillich in Pardue's work (48-50). While I am less familiar with some of the more recent contextual theologies that Pardue highlights, their inclusion produced exactly the effect he desired—he gave me access and raised my awareness of their work.

The attention that Pardue gives to the local, global, and historical nature of the church is an outstanding feature of his work. His theologizing and examples give a picture of the church that is both inspiring and useful. One can see the importance of local cultures and contexts, engagement with the global church, and appreciation for the shared past of all Christians. While Pardue frequently notes the tension inherent in living in light of all these characteristics, he engenders hope in readers' hearts that, through the power of the Spirit, unity within diversity can actually be a distinctive feature of the church.

Notwithstanding the superb features of the book, two areas warrant further attention in Pardue's work. First, the theological reflection and contextual theologies of women are largely absent. Inclusion may have delved Pardue into the somewhat thorny subject of who is allowed to engage in the theologian's task, but he did not shy away from engaging other areas that cause disagreement or tension in some evangelical circles. Moreover, as scholars of world Christianity have pointed out, the average Christian not only hails from the Global South, but she is also a woman.³ Although Pardue does occasionally draw from female scholars and theologians to make his points,⁴ and there are notably fewer female theologians than male, it would have been helpful to see at least one of his case studies focus on the contextual theology of a woman. Second, readers would benefit from a more extensive index, especially the inclusion of more names. For instance, he relies on Lamin Sanneh's translation principle several times in his argument, but Sanneh is not listed in the index (51, 64, 127, 191).

Resoundingly, *Why Evangelical Theologies Need the Global Church* should be a foundational text for seminary students and used in their core Christian Thought courses, especially those focused on theology, missiology, and Global Christianity. Students will find it to be a treasure trove of summaries of key texts in a variety of theological disciplines and fields of study as well as a model for a well-constructed theology. Most importantly, in Pardue, they will find a mentor who can give them categories and strategies for discerning their engagement with contextual theologies (3).

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3 See Dana L. Robert, "World Christianity as a Women's Movement," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 30, no. 4 (2006), 180-88; Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 1-2.

4 For example, he relies on the work of Kathryn Tanner to make a point about tradition in Chapter 6. See p. 159.

global Christianity at Boston University School of Theology and received a certificate in mission and ecumenism from the Boston Theological Interreligious (BTI) Consortium. She has taught and ministered in a variety of intercultural settings including three years in Kenya serving in a holistic child development organization, several years working with immigrants and refugees in the greater Chicago area, and seven years with an international educational ministry. Currently, she spends much of her time volunteering in her local church and community, especially among children and mothers, as she focuses on raising her young daughter with her husband.

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Review Article of *The Widening of God's Mercy: Sexuality Within the Biblical Story* by C.B. Hays and R.B Hays (Yale University Press, 2024)¹

Ben Witherington

In the beginning of *The Widening of God's Mercy* we are given personal stories from both Chris and his father Richard Hays as to why there has been a change in mind about what we should think about the Scriptures' prohibitions of same sexual activity (in both the Old Testament [OT] and New Testament [NT]), as well as related matters, such as gay marriage, the ordination of LGBTQ+ persons and the like. The trajectory of their argument is to reach a conclusion that LGBTQ+ persons should be given full inclusion in the Christian church without asking them to change their sexual behavior, indeed without excluding them in any way from being clergy, being married in a Christian ceremony and so on. And what led to this conclusion is participation in church communities where there is "full inclusion" of those folks. In short, *personal experience* has led to a re-evaluation of how to deal with the biblical data. And readers should not expect to find any treatment of the key texts in the OT and NT which prohibit same sex sexual activity. They deliberately are omitting any such discussion, presumably because – as they say—the traditionalists are right about what those imperatives actually say. Richard is explicit in saying he hasn't changed his mind about what those texts say and mean.

Chris also shares his frustrations with his perceived inconsistent policies of Fuller Theological Seminary as to what faith stance is required of members of the faculty when it comes to "the presenting issue" that this book seeks to address. Part of the argument, as we shall see, is that the Bible is full of "contradictions" or, put another way, full of evidence that God changes his mind from time to time on major issues partly in response to human requests or protests. We will deal with the "changes his mind" idea in the next part of this review.

In regard to full disclosure as to where I am coming from on this large issue, the two studies I published are in 1) *Biblical Theology*, Cambridge University Press (2019) that won the Association of American Publishers (AAP) PROSE Award along with Tom Wright's *History and Eschatology*, as the book of the year in theology and philosophy and 2) *Sola Scriptura, Scripture's Final Authority in the Modern World*, Baylor University Press (2023). The latter concludes that what the phrase meant for the Catholics who first used it (William of Ockham or Marsilius of Padua, or John Wycliffe) and then the Protestants is that God's Word, the Holy Scriptures, are *the final authority in matters of faith and practice*, not a human being, not even the Pope. This, in turn, means that human experience, reason, or tradition, if they have some kind of authority, clearly have lesser authority when discerning what is true about God and his will for humankind.

A major problem with *The Widening of God's Mercy* is that it does not understand the nature of progressive revelation, which is not the same thing as saying God changed his mind, not least because progressive revelation means we gradually learn about God's will and the believer's ability to understand that will. Nor does the book recognize the Scriptures as the final authority for faith and practice unless, of course, using one's own judgment, one gets to pick and choose which Scriptures. This, in turn, sadly makes *the interpreter*, not God, and not the Scriptures, the final arbiter of the truth in these matters. And this is no small matter!

At the very outset of the book, Chris presents us with an example from 1 Samuel 15:11-35, Exhibit A that God does indeed change his mind, and that Samuel is telling a lie when in 1 Samuel 15:29 the prophet says the following, "The Glory of Israel does not recant or change his mind! He is not mortal that he should change his mind!" Now this theme is not an isolated statement found only in 1 Samuel 15:29.

1 An earlier longer version of this review has been published on the Patheos website.

For instance, Numbers 23:19 clearly says, “God is not a human being that he should lie nor the offspring of humans that he should change his mind.” And there would be no need for God to do so since God is all knowing. God knows all actualities and all possibilities. Indeed, the Scriptures are clear that he knows things in advance of their happening (see Rom. 8), which means he knows how things will turn out in the human future. Malachi 3:6 says, “I the Lord do not change, therefore you O children of Jacob are not consumed.”

In other words, though human beings may change their mind and commit various acts that are sinful, God does not do that. Further, God does not go back on promises he has made to his people about not destroying them when they rebel or reject God’s Word. Hosea 11:1-9 should be considered since it involves the clear statement at vs. 9 that says, even though God is very angry with his people, he is not like human beings who are quixotic and go back on their word or change their minds. This last text is about God’s compassion on sinful Israel, and clearly about how God does *not* change his mind.

The argument that, because God is compassionate and merciful, then he can change his mind about whether something is sinful or not is a non-starter. The concept of God NOT changing is clearly linked to God being the creator of all things. Psalm 102:25-27 reads, “In the beginning you laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the works of your hands. They will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment. Like clothing you will change them, and they will be discarded. But you remain the same, and your years will never end” (NIV 2011). God is different from his creation and his creatures, especially in the fact that God does not change or change his mind.

The NT is equally clear on this matter. James 1:17 says God is the father of lights, and in him is no variation, no shadow of turning, indeed no darkness at all. Furthermore, one cannot appeal to Christ himself as a changeable part of the Godhead. Hebrews 13:8 clearly says Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. The eternity of Christ is the basis for saying he has an unchangeable priesthood.

But aren’t the differences in the various covenants indications that God has changed his mind about some things over time? Absolutely not. Jesus explains in Matthew 19 that many of the laws God gave Israel before the time of Jesus were given, not because God kept changing the rules but because of the “*hardness of the hearts of God’s people*” (v. 8). For example, this is why God allowed divorce under the Mosaic law. It was God’s fallen people, not God, that needed to change to receive the original plan God had in mind for marriage “from the beginning of creation” (Matt. 19:8).

Yes, there is such a thing as progressive revelation in the Bible. For instance, in the understanding of secondary causes. It was Satan, not God, that led David to take the census as a comparison of Samuel and the later Chronicles literature makes clear (cf. 2 Sam. 24 to 1 Chron. 21). The reasons such things were not revealed to God’s people during the time of the patriarchs but rather much later is not because God changed his mind but because God’s people were not ready in the Mosaic era for such revelations. Over time they became more receptive to a broader understanding of the mysteries of life and the afterlife. And, of course, the ultimate illustration is that in the New Testament Christ is the fullest revelation of God’s unchanging character, and the sending of the Spirit makes possible a believer’s understanding of such mysteries of the faith. God didn’t change his mind through these various covenants, rather he progressively revealed more and more of the truth about many things.

It will be useful at this point to note that the Hebrew word *nacham* about which Chris says has as one of its major meanings “change of mind,” *does not in fact mean that* (e.g., Jonah 3:10).

Here is the full list of what the Hebrew lexicon² says is the spectrum of meaning of this verb in its various forms:

Nacham: to be sorry, console oneself, repent, regret, comfort, be comforted

1. Niphal: To be sorry, moved to pity, have compassion; to rue, suffer grief, repent; to comfort oneself, be comforted; to be relieved; ease oneself
2. Piel: to comfort, console
3. Pual: to be relieved, consoled
4. Hithpael: To be sorry, have compassion; to rue, repent; to comfort oneself, ease oneself.

Though older translations of the Hebrew sometimes translated the word *nacham* to mean “repent,” even when applied to God, this is problematic. “Repent” refers to a response to a sin, indeed a sin against God, but the Bible is emphatic that God can’t be tempted, tempts no one, and is holy and righteous and never sins (e.g., James 1:13-14). God doesn’t violate God’s own will! Unlike sinful human beings, God has no need to repent. What one can say is that this verb, when used of God, is an example of anthropomorphic language and one must be careful about how one assesses its meaning.

I have no problem at all with the idea that God has compassion, sometimes regrets some things, can be moved to pity, can comfort and console his people, and that God, who loves his people, sometimes suffers because of and with his people. The Bible is not an advocate of the Greek philosophical idea of a God who is impassable and has no feelings. None of that, however, means that God changes his mind, and especially not about fundamental matters of theology or ethics. If 2 Timothy 3:16 is true, and all Scriptures are God-breathed and profitable for training in *righteous conduct*, then we should not expect that God changes his mind about such things. And, while we are at it, since it is the Holy Spirit that is doing that inspiring, we should hardly think that, when Jesus says the Spirit will lead his disciples into all truth, a further and deeper understanding of biblical truth is that he will be leading them to endorse ideas that contradict what the Bible actually says repeatedly when it comes to ethical behavior. Certainly not!

Chris’s presentation of the relevant OT evidence is well written and addresses an audience of clergy and laity. This book is not meant to be a scholarly monograph, but it is to be taken seriously as written by two seasoned scholars who have read the academic discussion and reflected deeply on the relevant matter.

His treatment of Ezekiel 20:25-26 is another example of his suggestion that God changed his mind. Chris thinks this text suggests that God advocates his people offering child sacrifice, whereas most OT texts strongly oppose that practice. Let’s look carefully at what the Hebrew text actually says. In the first place, it is clear enough this is a *judgment oracle* from God. Here is what it says because of God’s people being disobedient: “I gave them statutes that were not good and ordinances by which they could not live. I defiled them through their very gifts in their offering up all their first born, in order that I might horrify them, so that they might know that I am the Lord” (NRSV). God says that the statutes and ordinances did not reflect his good will. Then there is a statement of how God defiled them through their offering up all of their first born. Notice what it does not say. *It does not say God commanded them to offer up their children in sacrifice.* It says the recalcitrant Israelites were offering up their children to God, like we know some also did to Molech. In this regard, this text differs from God’s testing of Abraham by *commanding* him to offer up Isaac. What it does say is that God defiled them through their very gifts. In other words, God sees such action as defiling and horrifying—but he wants his people to have the same sense of revulsion as he himself has in regard to such actions.

2 Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1968), 636-37.

Here is what two Jewish interpreters say about this difficult text. David Altschuler believes, “The Israelites were forced to submit to oppressive laws and statutes in exile.” David Kimchi affirms, “The Israelites were removed from God because of their sacrifices of firstborn sons to Molech.” Clearly, this is a difficult text, but considering that it is part of a judgment oracle, in which God makes clear this is not his desire or good will for children to be sacrificed, and the text does not say he ordered the Israelites to do this, it only says they were doing it, we should not take this text as clear proof God changes his mind.

The discussion of the war passages in the Old Testament and of the so-called *lex talionis* (exaction of compensation in kind)] are again said to be examples of God changing his mind. What is never mentioned is that God is dealing with fallen and sinful people. What is never mentioned is that the *lex talionis* was intended to limit, not license, revenge taking which was already happening. Properly interpreted in context, this command meant “only an eye for an eye, only a hand for a hand, only a life for a life.” As we will see in the discussion of Jesus’ teaching on what Moses says about divorce, there is a hermeneutical key given by Jesus when reading such OT laws, namely, they were given due to Israel’s hardness of heart, to limit not license their sins.

It is surprising that there is no meaningful discussion of human fallenness and sin in these chapters, even though the Genesis story warns us about what’s coming. Remember one of the curses on Eve was, “your desire will be for your husband and he will lord it over you” (Gen. 3:16). In other words, “to love and to cherish will degenerate into to desire and to dominate.” This was the beginning of patriarchy which plays itself out in living color in the rest of the Bible. Patriarchy, like slavery, was a result of human sin and human fallenness, and this downward slide began with Adam and Eve. No wonder Paul later says that Christ was born under the Mosaic Law (which was given to limit sin) to redeem God’s people out from under a law they could not fully keep as fallen sinful people (Gal. 4).

On the other hand, Chris is right that, from as early as the story of Abraham, it is said to be God’s intent to bless all the families and nations of the earth, indeed, to have his chosen people be a light to the Gentiles as the idea was later called. This theme can be traced from Abraham right through the historical books and the prophets. This is all the more reason to take seriously and look carefully at what Michael Heiser says in *The Unseen Realm*.

Something needs to be said here about the dialogical passages in the OT, including in the prophets like Amos, some of which are in the Pentateuch, and some of which are in the prophets as discussed in Chapter 6 of the Hays’ book (see e.g., Amos 7:2). In some of these discussions, a prophet or a patriarch is often depicted as pleading for mercy or leniency for God’s people when God could rightly judge them. And in the end God shows mercy or relents. But the question that should have been asked about all such passages is, did God not know in advance where this conversation was going? Did he not know where Amos’ heart was? Did he not really know these other persons depicted as negotiating with God?

Surely, the answer is, since God is all knowing, he did know where the conversation was going. He did know what was on the heart of his patriarch or prophet and had already resolved to have mercy. He didn’t change his mind, but he dialogued with an Abraham or an Amos so they would better understand God’s will and be made to feel they were a part of the process of participating in what was God’s will all along. In each of these cases, it was to have mercy. In other words, Exodus 34:6 was and is always true about God. God doesn’t have to change his mind to be: “Yahweh, Yahweh – A God who is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness...”

Let it first be said that Richard’s treatment of the Gospels does indeed place the emphasis in the right place in terms of God’s mercy and compassion as expressed in Christ’s various teachings and healings and acts of fellowship. The problem with these chapters is the important topics they *fail* to

address. Examples are Christ's views on marriage, sexual sin, the eternal consequences for rejecting the Good News, and Christ's call of sinners to repentance in light of the coming Kingdom of God (see e.g., Mark 1:15 as a summary of his message).

We must have a concept of progressive revelation, namely that Jesus and his teaching and actions and character are the clearest revelation of God's character. If so, there are points at which, when Jesus says something definitive on these relevant matters, or even if one of his apostles like Paul does so, we must take these teachings very seriously as the clearest and furthest revelation of the character of God. God is righteous, and holy, and just. He is also called Love in 1 John 4, and is light, life, compassionate, merciful, and more. It is right to put an emphasis on the nouns like love, bearing in mind that we are not talking about *eros* but rather *agape*, God's holy and gracious love. So, it is in order to point out that, while the Hays' book basically does not address the issue of marriage (which is odd), Jesus has something very clear to say to his disciples about this matter when the question is asked why Moses permitted divorce. The importance of this passage is so great, that we must give it some detailed attention. Here is a translation of Matthew 19, bearing in mind that the Mark 10 account of this same teaching says Jesus said, "no divorce": "Some Pharisees came to him to test him. They asked, 'Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any and every reason?' 'Haven't you read,' he replied, 'that at the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female,' and said, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh'? So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.' 'Why then,' they asked, 'did Moses command that a man give his wife a certificate of divorce and send her away?' Jesus replied, 'Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard. But it was not this way from the beginning. I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery.' The disciples said to him, 'If this is the situation between a husband and wife, it is better not to marry.' Jesus replied, 'Not everyone can accept this word, but only those to whom it has been given. For there are eunuchs who were born that way, and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by others—and there are those who choose to live like eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. The one who can accept this should accept it'" (Matt 19:3-11 NIV 2011).

First of all, notice that Jesus only endorses heterosexual monogamy, and he does so on the basis of his understanding of the original creation order design of God. God made us male and female for each other. Only males and females could share a one flesh union that could lead to the fulfillment of God's plan that they be fruitful and multiply. Jesus is citing Genesis 1:27 and then 2:24. The only alternative he offers his own disciples is celibacy in singleness, using the language of being like a eunuch.

What is equally important is to notice Jesus' comment on Moses' permission of divorce. We are told that God allowed divorce *due to the hardness of their hearts*. And here we have a window on Jesus' own hermeneutic. He thinks that various of the OT laws were given because of the spiritual state of God's people at that point. But now with Jesus and the eschatological age has come, therefore, new occasions which can bring forth new teaching. This new teaching is not progressive in the modern sense of progressing beyond the OT teaching in ways that negate ethical rigor. To the contrary, Jesus is more demanding in his sexual ethic than the OT, not only basically ruling out divorce (and remarriage in Mark 10:11) for those whom "God has joined together," but he also intensifies the demand in regard to adultery, to include adulterous thoughts (see Matt. 5). Jesus is taking away the male privilege of divorce in his Jewish setting, which, as a result, gave women more security in marriage. But he is also allowing that the command to be fruitful and multiply is not *required* of all his followers – they can be single for the sake of the kingdom. You will not find a discussion of this anywhere in *The Widening of God's Mercy*. What Jesus does not say is that his disciples should be allowed to find other sorts of marriage arrangements other than the one God

intended at creation of humankind as male and female.

Another subject that could have used a careful discussion in this book is covenants. Covenants in the OT, such as the Abraham and Mosaic covenant and then the New Covenant announced by Jeremiah 31 and enacted by Jesus and his followers, are arrangements set up by God between God and his people. That there are limits to who is included in the saved category should be clear from Jesus' sayings about people going to Gehenna (e.g., Matt. 5:22, 29-30) or his parable of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31), or his saying about the narrow gate (Matt. 7:13-14), or his parable about the sheep and the goats (Matt. 25:31-46). Neither Jesus nor his apostles and early followers thought that the Gospel was some form of universalism. As Paul says repeatedly, salvation is by grace through faith in Christ crucified and risen (e.g., Rom. 8:34). While Christ has atoned for the sins of the world through his death, and is the objective means of human salvation, the subjective means is by trusting in Christ, being born again, and being baptized by the Spirit into the new covenant community.

Thus, when we see that the New Covenant doesn't require sabbath observance of Jesus' followers this is not a sign of a change of mind or incipient universalism. Rather, it's a sign that the covenant has changed, and includes some of the same commandments as found in the Mosaic Law, but many new ones as well. Such is the nature of contracts between God and his people; they differ according to the point in time in salvation history they are covering. Jesus is not merely an advocate of a more enlightened reading of the OT, though that is true. He is also offering teachings that go well beyond and sometimes against some of the materials in the OT. This is true because he perceives the eschatological saving reign of God is breaking in, and the new occasion requires a New Covenant, with many new commandments. This is not only for God's Jewish people, but also for non-Jews, as would become clearer later.

Understandably, the term "mercy" comes up again and again in Richard's treatment of Jesus' teaching. Jesus does emphasize mercy, but what is mercy? Mercy is what a sinner needs and gets when he or she is not punished according to strict justice. Mercy is not the same thing as grace.

It is interesting that Richard points to the word *hesed* which he translates as steadfast love. It is interesting because that very word *hesed* is universally translated in the Septuagint (LXX) as *mercy*, not as steadfast love, or loving kindness. Of course, the NT is in Greek and its authors use the LXX more than any other version of the OT. Jesus is perfectly well aware that tax collectors and "sinners" are indeed in need of repentance. Note the parable of the tax collector pleading for mercy, while the Pharisee lifts himself up by comparing himself to the IRS agent. In the story of Zaccheus, we see this need for and response of repentance clearly. It is no accident that Jesus says salvation has come to his house on that day.

Note that Richard follows Chris' lead and suggests that Hosea 11 shows God changing his mind to have mercy instead of judging (p. 138). This is not an accurate reading of the whole passage. God is depicted as debating with himself what he will do and in the end concludes, because he is God and not quixotic like humans, that he will *not* change his mind about his original love and mercy for his people. God will be faithful to his promises even when Israel is faithless. It is right to place the emphasis on Christ's compassion and mercy, but not at the expense of what he says about eternal consequences for rejecting his Good News message. Jesus says far more about people going to Gehenna or outer darkness than any other speaker in the NT with the exception of John of Patmos. It is important not to neglect the justice and righteousness of God, which is a theme throughout the Bible. Justice and righteousness ironically become an expression of love, through the substituting of God's Son to be the atonement for our sins. It should have been us on the cross but, as Paul says, the God of righteousness could not pass over sin forever and remain the person who God is—a God of holy love, not holiness without love, and not love without holiness.

In his dealing with the book of Acts, most of the exegesis is fine until one gets to the Decree

of the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15), which is definitely not about a creative re-reading of Leviticus. For one thing there is no mention of the prohibition of “things strangled” in Leviticus at all. This is actually a clue to the social setting James has in mind, namely idol feasts in pagan temples. Pagans did indeed strangle birds so the life breath would enter into the statue of the god and thereby invigorate or feed the deity. Furthermore, *eidolothuton* refers to meat sacrificed to an idol, which would be followed by a feast in which the idol or god would be the host. If one asks the right question as to where a Jew would assume one could find all four things prohibited in the decree (*eidolothuton*, blood, things strangled, and *porneia*) all in one place, including sexual immorality, it would be in a pagan idol feast in a temple’s dining room. After too much wine there would regularly be sexual, immoral behavior with the servants.

In short, the decree is about *venue*, not about a Levitical *menu*. Paul implements the decree in 1 Corinthians 8-10 where he prohibits attending idol feasts in temple dining rooms. Indeed, he says there is no problem with eating anything one finds in the meat market, including animals sacrificed in a pagan temple. Again, the issue is venue and where one finds those four prohibited things together, not menu. Finally, the reason James reminds the Gentiles about the heart of the Mosaic law, namely the Ten Commandments, is because at its core it is a prohibition of idolatry and immorality, including *porneia*.

So, if one wants to take the Jerusalem Council example as a paradigm for how to deal with the presenting issue in regard to same sex, sexual expression, James’ answer would be God’s Word prohibits it! And so does the teaching of the Apostle to the Gentiles in Romans and 1 Corinthians. One must reject the idea of an analogy between inclusion of various non-Jewish ethnic groups into the covenant community, something all along hinted at in the mission of the chosen people to be a light to the nations. This has nothing to do with accepting sexual practices which are clearly at odds with specific statements in both the Mosaic law and the New Covenant teachings. Again, the Holy Spirit’s leading us into a deeper understanding of the Scriptures does not include leading us to contradict the clear teaching of Scripture on some important theological or ethical matter. If the decree of James suggests anything, it suggests that in the New Covenant community the sexual ethical standards will still be as demanding as in the Mosaic law, if not more so. There is no trajectory of change on that issue in Scripture. Indeed, Jesus and Paul call us to a higher standard of ethical rectitude including in regard to the form of marriage they endorse.

Richard’s treatment of the Pauline letters rightly emphasizes the theme of mercy and love, while deliberately avoiding saying anything about the Pauline texts (e.g., Rom. 1:18-32; 1 Cor. 6:9) that clearly enough condemn same sex relationships. As it turns out, and we learn in the final chapter about “Moral Re-Envisioning,” this was part of the deliberate strategy of this whole book. The strategy was *NOT to deal* with the OT and NT texts that do indeed teach that the various behaviors being touted as normal by the LGBTQ+ are either explicitly or implicitly ruled out by these texts and also the ones that say that God’s intent is for heterosexual monogamy, when it comes to marriage, a teaching Jesus himself insists on. It is quite false to say that what was being condemned in the Bible is NOT same sex relations between consenting adults. There are various ancient examples of that from Jesus and Paul’s world, so that claim needs to be dropped, as Preston Sprinkle and others have shown (see my blog post of Oct. 12th at benw3.com).

There is a further attempt by Richard at an analogy between the discussion of the weak and the strong in Romans 14. Richard rightly suggests that these passages probably refer to Jewish Christians, who have too many scruples about the food they eat and the day they worship God, versus the Gentiles who have no such scruples. Clearly, Paul identifies with the strong, but wishes to protect the weak as also is the case in 1 Corinthians. But the attempt to suggest, then, that today the strong are those who have abandoned scruples about same sex sexual behavior (and related LGBTQ+-advocated behaviors), whereas the weak are those who maintain the teaching that the Bible explicitly gives on such behaviors, is far-fetched. One could just as easily turn this argument

on its head. The weak are those who have capitulated to the siren song of our pagan culture about sexual behaviors the Bible does not condone. The strong are those who have remained faithful to the biblical teaching against the general flow of the American culture. In the end, the attempt at analogies using either Acts 15 or Romans 14 and situations today are strained at best, and frankly unconvincing.

In the final chapter, it is argued that what is said in the OT and NT about slaves and slavery is something the church now deems wrong and not to be followed despite what is said in the Bible. The problem with this judgment is it fails to realize that the biblical dictates and statements about slavery, which is a practice, like patriarchy, that is a result of human fallenness and sin, are all *attempts to limit an existing and ongoing evil not license it!* Despite the fact that various people over the last 2,000 years thought it provided a warrant for enslaving people, this was not the intent of what was being taught. For instance, in the household codes in Colossians 3-4 and Ephesians 5-6, Paul must start with a situation that already is in place and exists in the household of new high status Christians with slaves. And, like any good pastor, he must start with them where they are, but not leave them there.

Notice the trajectory of change from Colossians where there is a remark about equality between masters and slaves (*isotes*), to Ephesians where we hear that masters are to serve their slaves and treat them with respect, and finally to Philemon where we see where this trajectory of change is going. The trajectory is moving to “manumission” because Onesimus must be seen by his owner, the Christian Philemon, as “no longer a slave, but rather a brother in Christ.” Paul already said in Galatians 3:28 that in Christ there is neither Jew nor Gentile, slave nor free, and no male and female. Amen to that. What he did not say or even remotely suggest is that the biblical standards of sexual morality should be changed to meet the preferences of a pagan culture.

I take it for granted that we are to love and welcome everyone into the Church. This does not mean that we are to accept all their ideas, beliefs, and behaviors. They can come as they are, but no one should ever expect to *stay as they are* when they are encountering Christ and the Spirit in the gathering of the church for worship and fellowship and discipleship. To the contrary, everyone, being sinners, should expect to be changed by being part of the body of Christ. What the church should never do is baptize people's sins, of whatever sort, and call it good and acceptable behavior. What actually does the most harm is treating sin and its consequences as if it isn't sin and has no serious consequences. The message of the Church today should be a message which balances mercy and righteousness. If the church did an adequate job of making clear that single persons are loved members of the forever family of Christ and should be treated with the same love and respect as traditionally married persons, then we would not need to be citing the verse which suggests it is not good for a human being to be alone. To be an integral, indeed essential, part of the Body of Christ and to be loved as such is not to be alone.

In the end do we really want or need a God who is quixotic and changes his mind? How exactly can we trust God and his Word if he keeps changing his mind? How can we even know what God really thinks about crucial matters if this is true? I especially raise this question because both Chris and Richard Hays are raising this issue in regard to God changing his mind AFTER the writing of Scripture on this particular issue. *There is no positive evidence in the Scripture that God changed his mind about sexual ethics, even if you accept the argument that God changed his mind on other subjects unrelated to human sexual behavior.* To the contrary, the critique of same sex sexual behavior is strong in both the Old Covenant and the New Covenant.

The argument that, after the Holy Spirit inspired the Bible, 2,000 years later that same Holy Spirit led the church in a different direction is not tenable. And the argument that we know that God's mind has changed, because we have experienced LGBTQ+ folk as good Christians who deserve to be included in anything and everything the Church does, is entirely an argument from

personal experience and not tenable. In short, it is an argument based on assumed analogies. The scriptural evidence that God changes his mind is not acceptable and involves a misreading of the key verb *nacham*.

Great is Thy faithfulness, O God my Father;
There is no shadow of turning with Thee;
Thou changest not, Thy compassions, they fail not;
As Thou hast been Thou forever wilt be.

Refrain:

Great is Thy faithfulness!
Great is Thy faithfulness!
Morning by morning new mercies I see:
All I have needed Thy hand hath provided—
Great is Thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me!³

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³ Lyrics by Thomas Chisholm, 1923.

Our God Is So Very Kind!

KELSEY JENNEY¹

The characteristic of God this article explores is our God's kindness and how God's kindness can shape our interactions with one another. As I minister, I find that kindness might be an accurate description of how we experience His presence, His blessing, and His actions. I have found myself searching for the kindness of our God in the midst of seeing others in the world. It feels as if His kindness could be proof of His presence with us, and has become a spiritual practice to help me desire God's voice, His will, and movement in a broken world. Perhaps I am searching for God more these days. The make-up of what we are experiencing in our culture and our world is more isolating, fearful, anxiety-producing, uncertain, and I don't think I need to convince others that it is an incredibly polarized point in this time; it is difficult to be in friendship and relationship with others. We tend to aggravate one another, expose each other's pain points, and try to define whether the person in front of us agrees with our views, actions, and sides with our allegiance to how we see and experience life. And I can't even begin to talk about social media interactions. I am eager to see how God's kindness is shared in Scripture, and what it extends to us as followers of God. I do not think I need to make the case that the world is more volatile than ever, and especially in the measure of interactions with one another. It might not be directly with violence, depending on where one lives in the world, but it is with differences of opinion, fear, anxiety, skepticism, and isolation. We tend to use the word "kind" in a very causal way in culture, and, in fact, it is more of a "catch" phrase now. The over generalized instruction is to "Be Kind to One Another," but we are unsure of what exactly that means as the emphasis is on being individuals who will need to live in neighborhoods, work environments, friendships, and families and simply exude some sort of arbitrary kindness. Through the course of this article, I will examine the word "kindness," and the use of this word in Scripture, how it reveals God's character, and the implications of kindness to the greater world.

MEANING OF "KINDNESS" IN SCRIPTURE

In searching for the word "kindness," I found that God's kindness is in Hebrew *chesed*. "*Chesed* means acts of merciful loving-kindness. God's *chesed* is unfailing."² Here are some sample scriptures and interpreting principles we might draw from the Old Testament (or Hebrew Bible) to explore this concept.:

Psalm 119:76, "Let, I pray Thee, Thy lovingkindness be ready to comfort me, according to Thy promise unto Thy servant" (ASV).

Principle #1: If God permits, God's lovingkindness is ready to comfort us.

Proverbs 19:17, "Whoever is kind to the poor lends to the Lord, and he will reward them for what they have done."³

Principle #2: Kindness to those in need is like lending to God Himself— we are participating with God when we are offering kindness to those in need.

Jeremiah 31:3, "The Lord appeared to us in the past, saying: 'I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with unfailing kindness.'"

Principle #3: God offers us an unfailing kindness.

Isaiah 54:8, "In a surge of anger I hid my face from you for a moment, but with ever-

1 The first drafts of this paper were presented for Professor Dr. William David Spencer's Theology Survey I for Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary Boston campus in October 2024.

2 Andy Lee, *6 Scriptures on God's kindness*, <https://wordsbyandylee.com/6-scriptures-on-the-kindness-of-god/>.

3 If not indicated, the Bible version cited is the NIV.

lasting kindness I will have compassion on you,' says the Lord your Redeemer."

Principle #4: God offers us, even in our biggest mistakes, His everlasting kindness and compassion.

Isaiah 63:7, "I will tell of the kindnesses of the Lord, the deeds for which he is to be praised, according to all the Lord has done for us—yes, the many good things he has done for Israel, according to his compassion and many kindnesses."

Principle #5: God is kind, and has done great things for us!

Jeremiah 9:24, "'But let the one who boasts boast about this: that they have the understanding to know me, that I am the Lord, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight,' declares the Lord."

Principle #6: God exercises kindness on earth, and delights in that.

New Testament verses and principles include:

Ephesians 2:6-7, "And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus."

Principle #7: Our God weaves the thread of kindness through Jesus to bless us with the riches of grace.

Ephesians 4:32, "'Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you."

Principle #8: Jesus exemplifies kindness and compassion.

Galatians 5:22-26, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other."

Principle #9: God's kindness is continued and expressed to us in Jesus. Jesus allows for God's kindness to be lived and seen, and it is because of Christ that we are able to know God's goodness.

Titus 3:1-8, "Remind the people to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready to do whatever is good, to slander no one, to be peaceable and considerate, and always to be gentle toward everyone. At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another. But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life. This is a trustworthy saying. And I want you to stress these things, so that those who have trusted in God may be careful to devote themselves to doing what is good. These things are excellent and profitable for everyone."

Principle #10: Kindness is not passive, but active. Living by the Spirit is an opening into living like Jesus, but it is a *gift*. If left to our own thoughts and feelings we would provoke, envy, and stay rooted in pride, but because of Jesus we are offered something different in the Spirit.

Romans 11:22, "Consider therefore the kindness and sternness of God: sternness to those who fell, but kindness to you, provided that you continue in his kindness. Otherwise, you also will be cut off."

Principle #11: Continue God's kindness as an act of obedience, and receive kindness.

Colossians 3:12, "Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience."

Principle #12: God's kindness spurs us to do good actions that are excellent and profitable for everyone.

In summary, throughout the Old and New Testament, these sample passages indicate that our God is kind! His kindness is unfailing, and He extends kindness to those He loves. However, kindness is not reserved only as a quality God can demonstrate. We can demonstrate kindness too! When we participate in kindness, we are also mirroring Jesus' nature, and, in fact, in Romans 11:22, we are asked to *continue* in His kindness. We are the extension of His kindness! When human beings offer kindness to one another, we are extending God's attribute to them, and His presence to those around us. Kindness is a quality of God and can then become a way we represent Him in the larger world around us. To think, we are invited to participate in allowing God to be revealed simply by kindness! When the kindness and love of God, our Savior, appeared, He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of His mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by His grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life. Kindness is not by righteousness, but by grace! I was absolutely struck by reading Titus 3. The verses are so helpful in how we are instructed to live and love, by realizing that participating in His kindness is greater than you and me, but in receiving kindness we become stewards of it! The desire to be like Jesus, and live like Jesus, means participating in kindness as a way to emulate Jesus in front of all others in our world. Yes, all others! Lastly, His kindness and our embodiment of kindness is a way to know the gifts of God, and life with Him in a more irresistible way.

IMPLICATIONS OF KINDNESS

I am eager to see how God's kindness can shape our interactions with one another. God's kindness is a part of Him and His character, and that has become clear to me. We can be kind because we have received His kindness first! Simply stated, kindness is believing that *Imago Dei* is held by the person in front of me, and their belovedness is not for me to judge or decide; but the desire to see the Image of God in the very person I am invited to interact with, to see as my neighbor, to extend love and grace to. Kindness then is the choice or invitation to offer their interests above my own, to radically show grace, not to shrink down, but instead offer authenticity with a curiosity to know the one in front of me, to help, and to be generous.

How then can God's kindness shape our interactions with one another?

As I write this, an election is approaching, and I cannot believe how timely the instruction of specifically Titus, but all of the verses collected, is to us! Not only how we should speak about one another, but also what we should devote ourselves to do—and not because we are extraordinary humans, but because God's kindness moves us. When Jesus appeared, He saved us, not because of our acts, but because of His great unfailing love, compassion, and kindness. I listen to so many political advertisements slamming candidates as if they are nothing, but a mere opponent. Titus, however, is clear how we are to live and love. Titus states so beautifully in the first three verses what we can do: do whatever is good, slander no one, to be peaceable, considerate and gentle! Titus goes on to state, "we lived enslaved to all kinds of passions and pleasures" But when God's kindness and love appeared He saved us and ushered us into new hope, irresistible grace, and doing what is good. We are invited to be kind because we live with an invitation to do more, to be rooted in what is good for all people, and, as Titus states, "profitable for everyone." This is kindness then; without agenda, to live with hope for the others in our neighborhoods, workplaces, and communities. "Profitable for everyone" invites me to lay my agenda down and seek God's will and His deep

love for each and every person I come into contact with.

Ephesians also clearly points out how we are to be kind to one another because of Jesus. And God's kindness is not based on what the person in front of me offers me, but instead to walk like Jesus in extending kindness to all. In short, our focus has switched to attacking and demeaning each other instead of extending God's gift of kindness to each other. And while attacking might be easier, in the moment feel more satisfying, and keep others at a safe distance; it actually is not helpful or constructive. It keeps us fractured and at odds with one another. The more something splinters it becomes easier to and easier to split, to disengage, and to judge!

Psalm 119 states, "May your unfailing *chesed* be my comfort." The instruction from Psalm 119 is that the comfort of our souls, our lives, and our hearts is God's *chesed* in our lives. Our comfort cannot be found in anyone else but God, and His unfailing kindness is *our* comfort. It is both unfailing, and not based on reciprocation. Not based on reciprocating is so difficult for you and for me. However, what is most striking is that it is a promise. This is not a negotiation or an observation based on our behavior, but instead a *promise* from God. It is why I am empowered to steward and give away kindness; I have received God's kindness and that is the promise to my soul, and the comfort for my life.

Our society is a more transactional place to live and exist. In our transactions, we are often only kind to those who are kind to us, or offer us something. We are also living in a fast paced, technological world. In this world, writer Makena Delaney states, "Kindness has taken a backseat to greed, technology, poor manners and the environment we live in. Instead of showing kindness we're afraid to be seen as the nice guy because we might be taken advantage of."⁴ Transaction and skepticism keeps us feeling safe. Instead of extending ourselves, and being uncertain of what might happen, we can stay safe and control what is in front of us. It is more apparent in the present, fallen human condition to limit our extending of kindness to those who are like us. It is easier mentally to simply give back what was given to us—good or bad. The transactions of our culture are in many ways how we are conditioned and, therefore, used to interacting with one another. We have developed sayings like, "You scratch my back, I'll scratch yours." This common adage points to the typical way we respond with one another. It benefits me if I benefit you. The lavishness of God's kindness does not play by these rules. And Jesus threw these rules out.

Richard La Faber writes about the diminishing kindness in the world, and he attributes it to hurry, technology, self-centrism, greed, environment, and upbringing. He writes, "Many people are focused on their own lives, on getting ahead and doing whatever is necessary to beat the other guy. People are more interested in taking care of themselves instead of reaching out and extending some form of kindness to others. We've become a society of "me first" that wasn't seen as often just a few years ago."⁵ This doesn't sound anything like the person of Jesus, and it does not represent what it means to live in the Spirit! We are part of a world that is so fast, so hurried, riddled with anxiety, and focused on "me." What if your way of being in the world is to exclaim, "I see *you*!" Or to remind someone they are good, loved, and worthy of being known. Kindness has to change us to truly see the one in front of us as an image bearer of God!

The difference is that God does not operate like "us." Oh, what a joy! God extends kindness, kindness without rules or regulations. God is always emphasizing relationship over rules and persons over policy. He continues to offer to His beloved kindness, love, faithfulness, and generosity. These are not transactional or conditional, but unfailing and forever. Often in contrast, in many ways, as noted, when we operate on auto-pilot we are desiring to keep ourselves safe. In fact, as

4 Makena Delaney, *Why the World Has Become Less Kind*, <https://makenadelaney.com/why-the-world-has-become-less-kind/>.

5 Richard La Faber, *Why the World Has Become Less Kind*. <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/why-world-has-become-less-kind-richard-la-faber-1c/>. However, "me first" was expressed in the book *Looking Out for #1* (1977) and became earnest with the 1980s "me generation."

humans, we are asking these three questions most often: “Will I be hurt? Is it dangerous? What will happen to me?”⁶ These are huge questions to navigate and often they sit in the recesses of our brain. We might not be aware that our caution, our agenda, and our constructed false self hide in these questions. However, if we are living like Christ, as referenced from the verses in the New Testament, we live differently. Jesus walked, moved, and breathed to reveal what is possible if we live kindness in a radical way. When we live like Jesus we actually present a safe place for people to answer those questions, to wonder, and stand in a posture of curiosity!

I wonder what it would look like instead to ask, “How can I be like Jesus here?” Millard Erickson wrote in *Christian Theology* about a portion of this, “God’s mercy is his tenderhearted, loving compassion for his people. It is his tenderness of heart toward the needy.”⁷ I wonder if the complexity inherent is that “needy” is not just in regard to finances or physical needs, but, instead, that we are all needy for something and for someone. This framing, then, invites us to see one another as needy for Jesus, for His love, and for only what He can offer. How would realizing that fact change the way I interact with God’s beloved if I see each of us as “ones in need?” I wonder if it helps uproot what my own agenda and my tendencies toward manipulation and keeping score try to earn? I continue to be struck by what Robert Mulholland shares: that we are “in the world for the sake of others!”⁸ Robert Mulholland explains, “The indulgences of bitterness and resentment can result in a cancerous corrosion of our spirit.”⁹ However, we are invited to live differently. Kindness does not corrode us, but instead *grows* us. Kindness makes us more like Jesus, and allows us to participate in what God is doing in the world. He adds, “The life hidden with Christ in God is one of such growing union with God in love that God’s presence becomes the context of our daily life, God’s purposes become the matrix of our activities, and the values of God’s kingdom shape our life and relationships; God’s living presence becomes the ground of our identity, the source of our meaning, the seat of our value and the center of our purpose.”¹⁰ AMEN! If the grounding of our identity is in God then God’s purposes become our matrix. Yes, His kindness is shaping us and how we are with others. The center of our purpose and our identity is God’s living presence; to be wrapped and hidden in Christ is to know kindness and extend it into the world. Instead of a corrosion of spirit being our daily life, we are participating in something that is wildly alive because of Jesus and His invitation to be like Him.

If we are to live like Jesus, in the world, for the sake of others, we are asked to live in kindness with one another. Practically, we are invited to extend total kindness in love and in grace to others. When examining how Jesus lived and loved, it was always person first. Now, this is a big ask and task for our human love, which is failing, to offer to others without agenda or manipulation.

God’s kindness is unfailing and a thread that weaves from the beginning by God to Jesus to the Holy Spirit. We are woven in kindness because we are woven into God by knowing Him, believing Him, and living Him. The invitation to kindness is the invitation to live and love like God; and, oh what a gift to be a little more like Him! Let us imitate our Savior by how we offer His kindness to a world that is desperate.

OFFERING KINDNESS INSIDE THE CHURCH

How do we *live* kindness? Moving from not just knowledge, or mere convenience, but embody kindness and live kindness in the larger world? I think the beginning of how I would offer this to church would be in Sunday School—often an amazing and effective way to start. Children understand and can participate in kindness in a less challenging way than adults might. There is less

6 Flora Slosson Wueller, *Prayer, Stress and Our Inner Wounds* (Nashville, TN: The Upper Room, 1985), 46.

7 Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academics, 2013), 266.

8 Spoken by Robert Mulholland at the Transforming Center in Libertyville, IL, 2014.

9 M. Robert Mulholland Jr., *The Deeper Journey: The Spirituality of Discovering Your True Self* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2006), 38.

10 Mulholland, *The Deeper Journey*, 139.

bias, less history to sift through, and simply more freedom in children. It would be a simple Bible Study on kindness for children, and then a way for the family to participate in kindness together. I also think, over the winter and summer months, there are so many ways to share kindness with acts of service. Even pairing kindness with Valentine's Day allows for a fullness of God's love to be explored, rather than just focusing on the day of romantic love. I think this would help all people to participate. If kindness could be partnered with each holiday theme, and accompanied by witness, emphasizing the fullness of being kind is to be like Jesus in the world for others. We then could explore how kindness is clothing ourselves in God (see Col 3) and, as dearly loved people, we get to clothe others (Matt 25:36; Gal 3:27; Rom 13:14). I think one really fun way to start this with children would be to "wear" kindness by drawing ways to be kind and acknowledging the ways God has given each of us gifts to exude kindness to others: laughing together, generosity, wisdom, and so much more! What a wonderful way to help a generation be rooted in kindness, to picture what it would mean to go to school or an extracurricular event and wear kindness as part of their day, their experience, their offering!

As I was thinking of what this could look like, I continued to come back to the beauty of blankets and that we could actually clothe people in God's kindness symbolized with blankets: wrapping others in His kindness, the physical feeling of warmth and generosity. I can't read Jeremiah 31:3 and not have the feeling of warmth evoked as I read God's unfailing kindness. Unfailing has the image of being wrapped, held tight, with security, and safety! Sharing blankets could be an entry way for families each night to share where they saw God's kindness or participated in kindness that day, like trading consolation (where God was seen) and desolation (where you long to see God) for kindness. What a wonderful rhythm for bedtime for families and for children especially. The blankets could simply have the word "kindness" inscribed on them, or be a symbol of what it means to be wrapped in God's kindness, and then to give that away to those we love and others.¹¹ Imagine a neighborhood at night being wrapped and enveloped into God's kindness as a physical act to consent to God's kindness in the world around them! Inviting His unfailing kindness closer and being willing to participate.

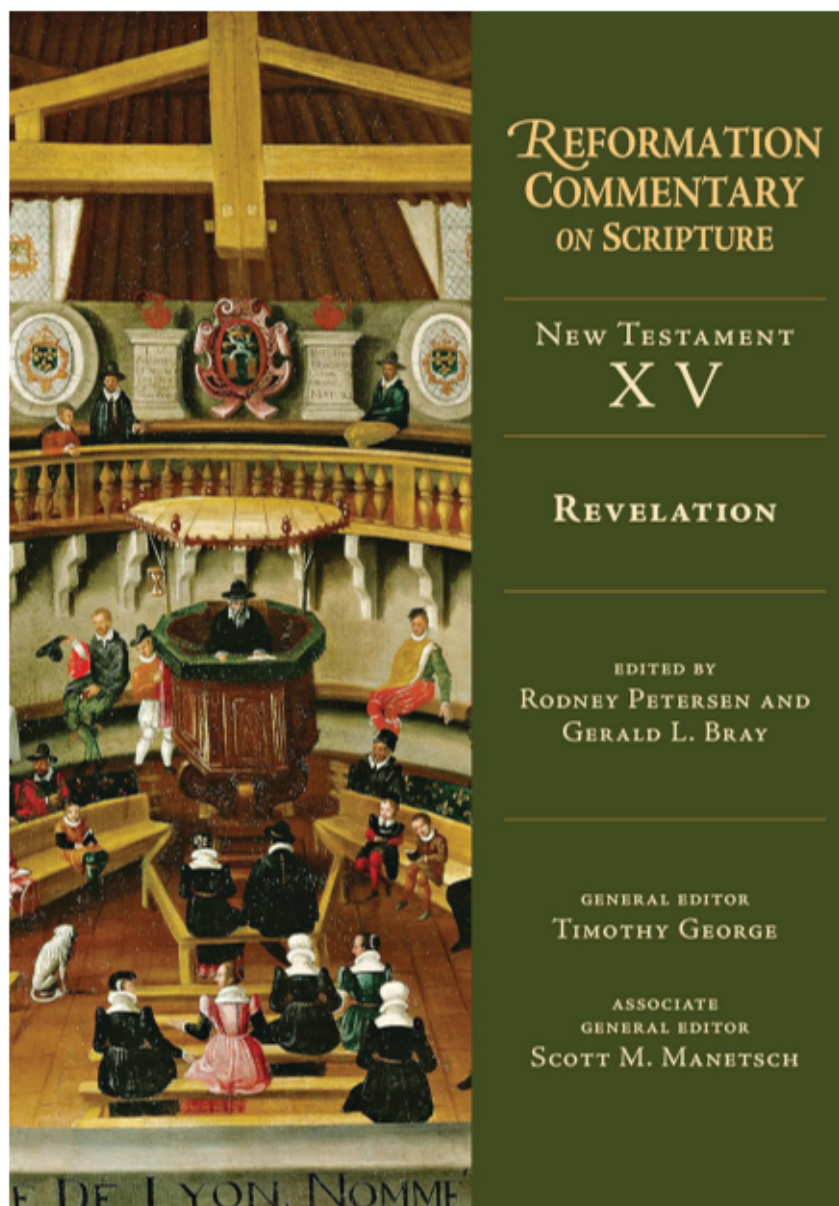
I would also offer the adults and children in a congregation or community to participate in breath prayer as a kindness practice. Breath prayer is simply attuning our breath to the One who gave us breath. It is a simple practice I learned about a decade ago, and has changed the way I stop and pay attention. It simply invites a person to breathe in a name you would like to use for Jesus, and exhale a want or need. In Colossians 3:12 we are invited to be clothed in kindness, and I wonder if tuning our breath helps us inhale what God offers. Practically, breath prayer allows us to become people who pause: pausing in our breath, to ask God to clothe us with kindness, and to pause and invite the Lord to be near. So often so much of being kind or choosing kindness is noticing. I would invite the congregation to find a breath prayer. As those invited to be people who pause, we ask God what kindness should look like as we talk with others, move through life, and interact with the world around us. A small breath prayer could sound like, "Lord, what does offering your kindness look like here?" Or "Lord, help me be a conduit for kindness here." That can include moments at the gas station or at the dinner table. I wonder what offering kindness could mean if we simply acknowledge all the others around us, or pray for those grocery shopping in the same aisle or ordering a coffee? As Christians we are invited to be people who call out God's goodness and offer it to others. This is wildly freeing and inviting. God is asking us, as believers, to join Him in kindness! And this could be another way we share together the glimpse of God in our world, participating with God in His kindness.

Kindness seems so simple, but in practice requires laying down our own wants and needs. It opens us to Jesus, to the beautiful invitation to live like Christ in the world, and to know His comfort and care in a new way. It breaks barriers, walls, and assumptions with more of an ease because

11 E.g., Boston's Starlight Ministry distributes blankets to those shivering on the streets.

it is an extension of God to the one in front of us! We could all use a little more kindness, and, I believe, in extending kindness to the world around us we will learn so much more of what it is like to be at least an ounce more like Jesus. Oh Lord, that it might be so... that I could look, act, speak, and know a little more of what it might be like to be an ounce more like you! Thank *you* Lord for your kindness!

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Review of *The Bible and Reconciliation: Confession, Repentance, and Restoration* by James B. Prothro (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2023)

RODNEY PETERSEN

This book (238 pp.), a summary of Catholic biblical theology, is foundational to the sacrament of reconciliation. It traces God's grand narrative to rescue humanity made in the image of God. As such, Prothro takes us on a journey through the Bible, engaging the meaning of confession, repentance, and restoration – both biblical and ecclesiastical as useful in the academy as in the church. Prothro's purpose in writing this book is informed by the dogmatic constitution *Dei Verbum* from the Second Vatican Council: "Sacred theology takes its stand on the written word of God, together with tradition, as its permanent foundation" (18). This study hopes to show the "foundations" or basic convictions on which the sacrament stands.

Following an introductory chapter outlining relevant Catholic theology, Prothro lays out the foundational premises of sin, mercy, and promise pictured in Genesis 1-11. He then explores the qualities of mercy, penalty, and mediation in the Patriarchs and book of Exodus. Continuing, he carries the narrative through the account of Israel's kings and prophets. In the stories of Old Testament histories, Prothro lays out both a rebuke and a promise for Israel. The practices of penance are shown to be central to a story that carries us beyond sin to the restoration of promise. This comes about through confession and restoration seen in the Psalms and Wisdom literature.

These chapters set the stage for the rest of Scripture. They show us sin at its roots in the internal desires and pride of human beings – and they show us the consequences of sin as it breeds more sinning and as the rupture in human relationships with God, one another, and creation deepens. And they show us God's merciful heart for fallen humanity. The approach taken is to follow the biblical canon, from Genesis to Revelation. Beginning with a broad narrative framework (Gen 1-11), Prothro moves beyond Israel's history to the advent of Christ. One of the contributions of a "biblical" as opposed to a "dogmatic" way of doing theology is to rearticulate truths in the Bible's own mode, using its images and metaphors and stories.

A unique aspect of Prothro's argument lies in his focus on the parable of the lost son used to personalize and particularize the story of welcome by God's mercy. The father receives the son in a merciful process in which the son receives the sacrament of conversion, confession, and penance. The Church's penitential practices outline the process whereby humanity recovers its "image" or "likeness" of God (Gen 1: 26, 28), seen in a rational soul and an unfettered free will. Reconciliation is not merely an individual project. A social understanding of humanity says more. The human person was made a social being by nature, created for fellowship with God, who is defined as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et spes*, 12). An inherently harmonious relationship was distorted: like the prodigal son, we chose to go our own way. The good news is that God did not choose to destroy humanity. His mercy is enacted for the world through the death and resurrection of Christ, paying the ransom for every soul past, present, and future. The ministry of reconciliation does not end with the conversion and baptism of an unbeliever but is an ongoing task guiding believers into ever deeper communion with God.

The ecumenical value of Prothro's work is that it brings to Catholic-Protestant understanding a dialogue around the meaning of reconciliation. This is grounded in foundational theological concepts of sin and salvation first laid out in Genesis 1-11 in which sin is met by mercy and promise. God comes not with accusation but with invitation: *Where are you?* So, too, in Genesis 4, the question is posed to Cain: *Where is your brother?* "For with Cain, as with Adam, God's first response is an open question that aims, as John Chrysostom puts it, 'to drag the murderer toward repentance.' God asks, 'Where is your brother Abel?' (Gen. 4:9). Even in the case of such a sin –

surely graver than whatever had made his earlier offering unacceptable – God’s first response is to invite a free confession by the sinner. But, as with Adam, Cain dissembles, and God turns from invitation to accusation” (31).

An invitation to God’s mercy is seen in Christ, the next phase of the biblical narrative. Prophesied by Jeremiah, narrated by Ezra and Nehemiah, Isaiah envisions a shepherd king in the mission of restoration. The New Testament opens with Christ and the Spirit in a mission of forgiveness. The call to reconciliation is one of growth in Christ into the manifold mercy of God. This grand narrative depicts the movements of fall, repentance, and restoration. It is fitting that Prothro closes with 2 Peter 1:3-4 in which the Petrine text envisions the heirs of Adam that have fallen into corruption through disordered lusts and desire to enjoy the benefits of God’s creation apart from God (210). If sin is not dealt with now, it will be dealt with at one’s judgment. Sin is to be dealt with by repentance and growth (212-14).

In the series preface by series editors, Timothy C. Gray and John Sehorn, they write that they hope that the series of which this book is a part “helps Protestant believers better understand how Catholic sacramental teaching is born of Scripture and animated by it” (xiii). They continue adding that, “However much the Church has insisted upon the unity of Word and Sacrament,... there is a need for a deeper investigation of the relationship between word and sacrament in the Church’s pastoral activity and in theological reflection (Benedict XVI, *Verbum Domini* 53).” Indeed, Prothro has given us an easy read with profound expectations.

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Review article of *Reading Genesis Well: Navigating History, Poetry, Science and Truth in Genesis 1-11* by C. John Collins
(Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2018)

JUDITH A. DIEHL

Is sin in the world the fault of Eve and her disobedience? Because Eve was created second, does that mean that women are inferior to men? How are we to understand the creation story and role of men and women in the book of Genesis?

It is true that there may be many ways to interpret the first book of the Hebrew Bible, *Genesis*, so named because it speaks of “the beginnings.” This book is often misunderstood, in many ways, and yet it is foundational to our understanding of the rest of the Bible, including the New Testament. It is the basis of our One-God theology, and it is key to our human relationships, with each other, and with the One God.

What is important to realize is that our view of any biblical text depends on our interpretive approach. In his approach to Genesis, author C. John Collins digs deeply into theories of linguistics, literary study, and rhetoric. In other words, he explores the types of texts and language in Genesis, the authority relationship that existed between the biblical author and the original readers, what context and settings are assumed by the received audience, and what the text was intended to do for the recipients (41-48).

Historically, Collins writes, much of the theological discussion about Genesis during the twentieth and twenty-first centuries came out of developments from nineteenth-century Europe. Scholars developed what may be called exegesis by the “plain sense of the words” (20). The creation story in Genesis, then, seemed to be at odds with the blossoming theories of natural science. Thus, scholars responded with the idea of “phenomenal language,” or the “language of appearance.” This was the idea that the biblical authors spoke in terms of what things *looked like* to human beings (i.e., the “sky looks like a glassy, crystalline solid dome”). This idea, in fact, led to the realization that much of Genesis is written in figurative language and poetic description (21).

Thus, modern readers may hold to a “literal” meaning of a biblical passage, but at the same time, we have literary tools that need to be employed to understand a passage accurately and truthfully. We need to engage in discussions about the “hard” passages in Genesis with great thought as to how language and literature work. Collins effectively applies modern linguistic approaches to the age-old text. Newer disciplines such as literary and rhetorical criticism and sociolinguistics do help us better to interpret ancient literature. Collins is such a critical thinker, as he employs a “linguistic-rhetorical-literary approach” to Genesis, while not rejecting other familiar tools of exegesis, such as “lexicography, syntax and history” (29).

Perhaps Collins’ approach sounds strange, unfamiliar, and challenging to today’s typical Bible reader, and even to some Bible scholars. But in order to read “*Genesis Well*,” today’s readers can apply his approaches to interpreting Genesis chapters 1-11, even to those problematic passages that relate to gender and “original sin” issues. Collins’ book is especially useful for seminary students and instructors, teachers and preachers, and for anyone who is puzzled by the stories in Genesis and how they have been interpreted in the past history of the church.

Collins calls on the familiar author C. S. Lewis to assist him in his careful reading of the stories in Genesis. Lewis was trained in philosophy, the classics, and English literature, as well as theology, and he lends a hand to Collins’ analysis of the Genesis literature. Collins follows a “Lewisian, critically intuitive approach to hermeneutics” (27). As an example, the Old Testament Psalms can be read through the lens of poetry, including structures, sounds, metaphors, liturgy, and other

figures of speech. Then the Psalms can be read through the lenses of themes and theology, and their significance is more transparent.

Likewise, to analyze Genesis 1-11, Collins studied different modes of human communication which are used for different purposes. First, different kinds of communication serve as backgrounds for shared experiences in the world. For example, the announcers of a football game use a different kind of communication than a mother rocking her baby to sleep. Second, in reading Genesis, there are different types of contexts, or settings. Third, there are different functions related to different texts. This last observation is very important: as far as we can discern it, what is the *aim* of the author of that particular passage? The function and intent of the football announcer's communication is radically different from the function and intent of the calming mother; their tasks and their goals directly affect their forms of communication.

Collins notes that Genesis 1-11 offers to Israel (and to Christians) "pre-history and proto-history: the account of things before there are any written records [creation] and of things at the earliest stages of written records" [humanity]. Lewis contends that "Christianity, going on from [the Hebrew Bible] makes world history in its entirety a single, transcendently significant story with a well-defined plot pivoted on Creation, Fall, Redemption and Judgement" (134). Indeed, this is a fair summation of the plot of the Old Testament, later affirmed by the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The New Testament accounts of Jesus do not stand alone; he is the fulfillment and the culmination of the larger story that began in Genesis. Still to be completed is Jesus' return and the final chapters of redemption and the judgment of humanity (135).

In addition (and the most exciting aspect for me), Collins discusses the subfield of *speech-act theory*, which is a recognizable way that people use language to accomplish their desired effects. As a broad definition, speech-act theory is "analyzing the text as an action performed by a speaker or writer" (41). That is, in every utterance (or written text), we can observe three aspects:

Locution is the actual form of words spoken (or written);

Illocution is the intended effect of those words (on actions, behavior, beliefs);

Perlocution is the actual effect of the words (51).

For example, Jesus knew very well how to use language to achieve his intended effects. He was very good at asking rhetorical questions with the desire to challenge people, to reveal his own identity, and/or to redefine his opponents' concepts. In his discussions with "the Jews" in John 8:31-59, Jesus' questions (locution) were intended to refute the preconceptions and the deeds of his Jewish antagonists (illocution). They could not understand Jesus' message, nor his great "I am" statement. His claim of divinity offended them so much that, ultimately, his opponents had the desire to stone him (8:59, perlocution). Moreover, Jesus used many figures of speech, such as paradox, personification, and hyperbole. Each message has its own effect, which his audience had to discern. Often his disciples did not understand his messages, which they may have realized only later (John 16:17-18).

In the same way, the commands of God in the Old Testament are straightforward messages to his people (locution). God intended his people to obey his commands down to the last detail (illocution). However, the perlocution was not always in compliance with his commands, and then problems arose within the community (disobedience). The point is, as we study any ancient text, we must consider these crucial aspects of the writings: what is the *form* of the words (prose? poetry)? What is (are) the *intention(s)* of the author (illocution), and how was the message received by the *original* audience in their time and in their culture (perlocution)? By understanding the original audience, we can better understand the "rhetorical situation" of the stories (123).

In short, the stories in Genesis were not written simply to communicate information about fruit, snakes and trees, but were told and retold to teach the *original* audience about God and about

themselves. Indeed, used as an interpretive device, speech-act theory is extremely helpful in bringing readers closer to God. The author proposes that, merely through God's act of speaking, things came into existence ("And God said....," Gen 1:3, 6, 9, 14, 20, 24). God's creative decrees alone were a contrast to the other feeble pagan gods and, uniquely, his decrees placed God over and outside of his creation. Simply through his speaking (i.e., his commands, conversations) a relationship was established between the deity and his people. Later, the covenant, words spoken in agreement, put down in writing, was the means by which this relationship was solidified. Clearly, the speeches (words) of God are his true actions, either directly (like the Decalogue) or indirectly, through a human agent like the prophet Moses, given to his people for their benefit.

THE NARRATIVES

Literarily, Genesis was not written as a scientific textbook; *it is a story* (my emphasis). Most of Genesis is written in narrative prose, stories which were told and retold for centuries. Of course, the writer of Genesis was not an eyewitness to creation, with a video camera, but the acts are narrated from the perspective of someone who witnessed it all. Much, much later, God revealed to the author stories to tell his audience *that would make sense to them* (my emphasis). Perhaps it was Moses who told the stories, wrote them down, and later "editors" collected the stories and preserved them for later generations of God's people. The creation stories were written for the ancient nation of Israel, as its people were preparing to enter the promised land. The audience already knew about the water, seasons, sun, moon, and stars, and they needed to be reminded continually that these were *not* deities to be served. The intent, then, was not just to supply information, but to clarify for the nation *who is in charge* (again, my emphasis). So, the Genesis stories were originally told to instruct the Israelites, and to reveal God's plans and purposes for his people (Gen 12:2-3). Those people following Moses were "heirs of God's promises, to be the vehicles of blessing to 'all the families of the earth'" (113).

Collins observes how the literary indicators show that Genesis 1-11 are a unified whole, connected but separate. The stories weave together ordinary narration, description, explanation, and imaginative poetic speech. These chapters provide a beginning to a "big story" for the people of Israel which presents a "world picture" or a "world view," and which is much later passed down to Christ-followers. The "big story" spoke to the individual as well as to the nation as a whole. Through characters and events and figurative language, the author of Genesis teaches, reminds, convicts, and reassures the Israelites of who God is and how he interacts with his people. The Genesis narratives provided an alternative to the "origin" stories in other Ancient Near East cultures and provide the truth about the one, true God.

GENESIS 1

The account of creation in Genesis 1:1-2:3 includes pictures of "days forming and days filling." This story is a "display of God's character and his plans...We can suspect that the implication is that God made humankind so they would imitate his attributes and character, especially as they rule his creation" (164). Chapter 1 functions as a "calling" for human beings, to establish a kinship with the animal kingdom and use all their human capacities to establish "dominion" over a world that reflects God's wisdom, faithfulness, care, and creativity. The characters in the story are seen from the writer's (or editors') viewpoint. God appears to be *like* a "craftsman," going about his work week, which is an understandable analogy for humans, but all of creation was not completed in a literal seven-day time-period. Adam is created to distinguish the status of humanity above the animals in God's creation. Humans are not divine or semi-divine beings, but beings with a special relationship with God. All God's creation perfectly complies with his commands; initially, there was nothing evil or rebellious. It is all "very good;" conditions on earth are perfect for human beings, male and female, who are to rule it with care and wisdom (Gen 1:31) (166).

All of this is to say that it is easy for readers today to misunderstand the meanings of many ancient texts (like the OT). If we read the Bible as if it were written for us in our age of scientific discovery and complex technology, we then criticize the integrity of the texts. Hence, the stories in Genesis were *not* written to explain the existing universe, nor was it written as a judgment of women. These stories do *not* condemn, subjugate, demean, or debase women at any point in time (my emphasis).

GENESIS 2

After the account of creation, we find the beginnings of human history, and the story of God's plans for humanity (Gen 2:4-4:26). Genesis 2 is another story that is usually seen as a complement to the first creation story, not a second creation story complete unto itself (168). This is a chapter about relationships: God to his creation; God to humanity and between human beings. God personally reveals himself to bless and be present with his people. Yet, the first chapters of Genesis also show humanity's continual spiral away from God.

The work of God in chapter two demonstrates a transcendent God who is outside of his creation; he cannot be manipulated, appeased, or coerced like the pagan gods. The creation project culminates in a search for a "fitting helper" for the man and God's creation of a woman. The intimate bonding of the two created beings demonstrates the necessity of human relationships and reflects the relationship between God and his people. The story has a happy ending with "male and female" *both* "formed in the image and likeness of God." Certainly, chapter two clearly demonstrates that, as created, the man and the woman are equal, both with life and with moral discernment. The woman was "made" by God to complete the man and be united to him (Gen 2:23-24). Without the woman, the human man could not fully recognize his humanity and reproduce, which was so important in ancient civilizations, as it is today. The consequences of this story have far-reaching effects: marriage of one man and one woman in general is a human ideal (Gen 2:24); polygamy, though it appears to be permitted in the Bible, is not God's perfect plan. Children perpetuate humanity, and "any other kinds of union were known to be unfruitful" (173).

Furthermore, in an agrarian society (context), the division of labor was natural. Obviously, there were differences between the man and the woman, which determined their assigned labor. The ancient audience was fully aware of such differences and such assignments. The man, with greater upper body strength, took on heavier tasks, such as farming and fighting. While Adam is given the "work" assignment, this did not necessarily imply a role of leadership and ultimate authority in the human relationship. "That role belongs to God." Women are biologically equipped to carry and nurture children, but that did not imply that Eve was placed only in a subservient, servant role to the man. Their physical differences led to "complementary roles in the community" (173).

Collins writes that, in other ancient cultures, "it is easy to reason that a distinction of role corresponds to distinction of value...[but] the Genesis creation story provides a counter-narrative to such reasoning." The Genesis story counters the dishonor placed on women which appears in other ancient stories and societies (173-174). Nothing in Genesis 2 creates a hierarchy of importance of the man over the woman. Collins concludes, "A good audience ought to put together the common participation in the image of God (Gen 1:27) and the mutual need of man and woman (2:18-24) to counter the degradation and exploitation" of women (174).

GENESIS 3, INTRODUCTION OF SIN

Even so, isn't the introduction of sin into the world a consequence of Adam and Eve's disobedience in which they *both* participated? It is interesting that the story of human disobedience takes place in a "garden," "a setting overflowing with God's abundant provision;" isn't that just like human nature? (174). There is a conversation between the people and God, which, of course, the original audience would have understood as a literary, rhetorical device, intended by the author

to illustrate a personal, caring God. God asks, "Have you done what I commanded you *not* to do? Have you disobeyed my command?" (Gen 2:17; 3:6). These rhetorical questions would be easily answered by the ancient audience who would admit that, yes, the action of the human beings was "sin." Later, readers have even suggested that "it was all Eve's fault," and that, as a result, women are untrustworthy because Eve succumbed to the serpent's invitation (173). But we must also remember that, initially, God gave his command to Adam (Gen 2:16-17), as the Hebrew word "you" is masculine singular ("you will surely die"). Eve did not act alone; she appropriated God's command for them both: in Genesis 3:2, "we" is plural and in Genesis 3:3 "you" is plural (177). As a result, in Genesis 3, the biblical author is showing how the man, the woman, and the serpent were all divinely judged, but only the serpent and the ground ("dust") were cursed. God cursed the serpent, who is a symbol of rebellion from God. In a sense, both Adam and Eve represent all humankind; they are an "anachronism based on Israel's experience" (178).

In the third story, in Genesis 3, we "overhear" conversations to augment the author's descriptions and explanations; through metaphoric language, he attempts to "show" his audience, not just "tell" them. The ancient author used a familiar serpent as "a figure of deception and thievery" (175). When the sly foe ("the deceiver," Gen 3:1; see Rev 12:9; 20:2) spoke to Eve, he suggested that God is a liar and is not worthy of their trust or loyalty. Yet, God rebuked the serpent and expelled the human beings from the perfect "garden," implying that the world is not a perfect place anymore. Thus, the serpent must "eat dust," which implies humiliation and defeat, and "to go on the belly," which pictures "the defeat of a beaten foe" (175). After the "first couple," the human descendants continued to fall so far from God's ideal that the readers could see exactly where evil comes from. Evil, wickedness, and deception are *not* from God, but he allows human beings to make their own decisions. The stories in these chapters present the original plan of a good creation by God and the opposing story of the consequences of human disobedience and rebellion.

No doubt, as Collins points out, the Israelites already had a "sense of dark powers, hostile to human beings." Genesis 1-3 implies the existence of such powers, but it is also clear that such evil cannot "outwit or overrule Creator God." The Israelites had already experienced such powers, and such temptations: "The people could not deny dark powers, and the serpent fit all the features with which they were familiar" (175). It is interesting to note that "the term 'sin' is not used anywhere in the Genesis stories... nor do we find any of the terms usually understood as 'evil,' 'rebellion,' 'transgression' or 'guilt.' In the Hebrew Bible, the story of Adam and Eve itself is nowhere cited as the explanation for sin and evil in the world" (176).

Yet, the perceptive reader, even in the ancient world, would disapprove not only of what the serpent said, but also of Adam and Eve's response to him. They would recognize the human submission to evil as "sin," and understand the story as some kind of "fall." Again, there is no biblical author that labels these events as a "fall," but it is a good description of human decisions that do not "fall in line" with the plans, purposes and commands of God (177). The choices of both Adam and Eve, in spite of God's words to them, affected the whole course of human history. The pair were deemed as part of what was "very good" (Gen 1:31) but fell into evil deception. The consequences of their disobedience affected not only them, but their descendants as well, and the bond between God and humanity that existed from the beginning was broken (177).

As a conclusion to this weighty book, Collins writes, "My attention here is on what the faithful are supposed to be getting from Genesis; that is, on the perspective of faith, that all this comes from God and reflects his purposes for humankind. What kind of stance, then, should a good reader take in exercising dominion over God's world? One of trust, and confidence, and stewardship, and bold embrace" (288). My conclusion is that this is not an easy book to read and absorb, but Collins tries very hard to justify his points (with plenty of footnotes) and make them understandable and applicable for his readers. I heartily recommend this book as a vivid introduction to literary

analysis. Collins opens a whole new avenue of interpretation of a part of the Old Testament that has been misinterpreted and misused for years.

Dr. Judith A. Diehl did her PhD work at the University of Edinburgh in the New Testament. At Denver Seminary, she taught New Testament and Hermeneutics. She authored three journal articles for Scot McKnight in *Currents in Biblical Scholarship*, which addressed the “Roman Empire in the New Testament,” followed by the “Introduction” to the book, *Jesus Is Lord, Caesar Is Not*, Scot McKnight and Joseph Modica, editors (InterVarsity Press). In 2020, she wrote the commentary on *2 Corinthians* for the Zondervan series, the “Story of God Bible Commentary Series,” Tremper Longman III and Scot McKnight, editors. Her newest book is *John 17 and the Power of Prayer*, emphasizing her interest in the Fourth Gospel. Dr. Diehl served as an adult education pastor in Colorado for over four years, and her ministry has been focused on teaching the Word of God to adults. She lives in the Rocky Mountains and enjoys skiing in the winter and hiking in the summer. A wife and mother, she and her husband have two grown sons and a grown daughter.

Review of *Exegetical Journeys in Biblical Greek: 90 days of Guided Reading* by Benjamin L. Merkle (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2023)

LARK KELSEY

Congratulations! You completed coursework in Biblical Greek. Now what?

Seminary professors often use the old adage, “If you don’t use it, you’ll lose it” in reference to language studies. Once course requirements are completed, it can be difficult for students to establish habits that keep them connected to the original languages.

As an experienced professor and an author of one of the top introductory Greek grammars (*Beginning with New Testament Greek*), Benjamin Merkle is well aware of the challenges that students face in language learning and maintenance. His previous book, *Greek for Life: Strategies for Learning, Retaining, and Reviving New Testament Greek*, gives compelling reasons to maintain language skills and offers suggestions on how to create reasonable rhythms. However, Merkle’s newest book in the field offers more than suggestions. It paves a pathway and provides a guide along the way.

After a short introduction, the book offers 90 daily readings to guide the reader through a 10–15-minute walk through the Greek text. The carefully crafted exercises are rooted in Scripture and each day focuses on just one or two verses. After reading the verse(s) aloud, the reader parses the verbs, identifies the nouns, and writes out a translation. An answer key is included so readers can check their work and learn from mistakes. The author also includes some syntactical notes and a short paragraph of commentary. Just as a student trained in art approaches a painting with a different appreciation than a general museum patron, a student trained in Greek has unique tools to aid their devotional reflection on the text. This book acts as a teacher standing with the student and reminding them of all they have learned, offering up a text so they can practice their Greek training. After five days, the reader has covered a complete literary unit and moves on to a new set of verses. The selected readings include every New Testament author and a variety of literary genres.

Divided into three, 30-day “Journeys” (Easy, Intermediate, Difficult), this book is a perfect companion for a student in between semesters or former students looking to regain their proficiency. While there are plenty of websites and myriads of tools available to those who want to continue in their studies, the sheer number of resources itself can be paralyzing. Students can feel overwhelmed by the options they face in creating post-course habits. Merkle removes some of the hurdles by creating an easy-to-follow pathway to developing consistent post-course interaction with the Greek text.

The first 30-day journey would be ideal for use between semesters of Greek 1 and 2 to combat the attrition that often thwarts students early in their second semester. Or all three journeys could be completed over the summer to keep the language fresh for students’ exegesis work in the fall. Although printed as a traditional paperback book, its function is intended as a workbook to write in. Hence, the relatively small size makes it suitable for travel, but the traditional paperback binding makes writing in the pages slightly cumbersome.

Professors can leverage this as a tool to keep students accountable in between semester breaks by assigning each of the three Journeys at the close of three corresponding semesters in Greek, either as an optional assignment or as extra credit. Ideally, this would be included in a resource list for purchase during the honeymoon phase of Greek 1 and become a lifeline to keep a student’s motivation rolling at the end of each semester. Alternatively, academic advisors could recommend this to students who have to take a pause in their Greek coursework or those considering returning after an extended break.

This book would also make a perfect gift for a graduating student, many of whom could benefit from a simple pathway that helps them reap the benefit of the investment of time and money they have already spent in their language studies. Although each daily lesson is short, it is not necessarily the depth but the consistency that is key. Developing a daily habit of interaction with the text becomes an on-ramp to a lifetime of journeys through the original languages.

Lark Kelsey is a graduate of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary (MATS '24) and a current ThM student. She lives in Gainesville, Florida where she works remotely as a Teaching Assistant for Greek and New Testament courses. Her articles and video tutorials can be found at www.LarkTheoSis.com.

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**Review of *Who Leads? A Concise Look at Top Bible Scholars on the Male/Female Question* by Jane L. Crane
(Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2024)**

LAUREN MULFORD

Who Leads? was written as “a concise look at the top Bible scholars on the male/female question,” as the subtitle reads. It is intended for scholars, preachers, and laity. It is accessible and yet includes abundant research notes for those interested. The book is a quick read at only 84 pages (with 82 pages of endnotes). Jane L. Crane accesses and shares an abundance of scholarship on what is the accurate context and translation of the Bible’s passages that speak to headship and leadership. Crane holds an impressive pedigree including leadership with the Lausanne Movement and the Billy Graham Crusade.

One day, hopefully, we will not be disputing among ourselves over who is regarded as the greatest but instead listen to the words of Christ: “*But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves*” (Luke 22:26 NIV). As long as the numerous poorly translated Bibles and eisegetical teachings proliferate, books like Crane’s will be needed. She jumps right to the heart of the matter and expounds proficiently on the issues.

Each chapter consists of a few pages of conclusions corresponding to dozens of scholarly-researched endnotes. Since the discussion has been ongoing, Crane is able to direct readers to where to find more information while keeping her chapters direct and short. Rev. Dr. James D. Smith writes the foreword and rightly summarizes the entire book by answering the question of who leads with “God”: If we can be teachable, if we can question our formative beliefs and faith traditions, maybe we can enter this discussion with facts rather than simply opinions and face Scripture with exegesis rather than eisegesis.

Crane starts with a three-page chapter explaining that no translation of the Bible is perfect. I’m reminded of the Italian proverb “Traduttore, traditore,” meaning that the translator is a traitor. We each have unrecognized biases and preferences. If we are not teachable and humble, we will never grow past our initial limitations.

From the Bible as a whole, Crane comments on Genesis 2, explaining that a “helper” is the powerhouse of the one being helped, not a subordinate. And much as in 1 Samuel 8, where Samuel tells of what a king will do, so in Genesis 3:16 God explains what will happen. He does not say he curses Eve in any way and does not command for her to turn toward her husband. Rather, Crane explains that turning toward her husband is meant to emphasize that she is now no longer turning toward God (7).

Chapter 4 highlights Jesus’s ministry and his constant honoring of women. It is interesting to note that God constantly undermines and subverts patriarchy which stands in contrast to those who claim patriarchy is a godly standard. If God was patriarchal, he would not have sent an angel to Mary. He would have simply told her father or husband and they would have informed her of her duty. Instead, God honors Mary. The Bible juxtaposes Mary’s great belief and obedience to the lack of the priest’s. While God praises Mary, he punishes Zechariah (16). Crane quickly runs through several women and parables where Jesus honors women and notes “he never preaches a doctrine of male leadership or women’s subordination to men” (21).

So much of what Christ taught was sacrificial love. Crane reiterates that command several times throughout the book. She highlights how God allows women to read the life-giving words of the Bible and practice self-control rather than be subjected to the control of others. She explains

how a “head” in the New Testament has nothing to do with authority (ch. 7). She states man-woman-Christ is a chronology in 1 Corinthians 11 and interpreting it as dominance would make no sense.

Crane goes on correctly to explain that love, respect, and submission are all mutual in the New Testament (49). She points out how some translations purposefully obscure that all people are called to submit, including men to women, by cutting the single sentence of Ephesians 5:21-22 into two. She summarizes the ancient house codes – the cultural norm was for the wife to be obedient and give her life for her husband – noting that is never what God called for a wife to do. In fact, Paul tells men to sacrifice their lives for their wives; the exact opposite of their ancient culture and patriarchy (51).

Jesus said, “So the last will be first, and the first will be last” (Matt 20:16), and yet in today’s scholarship and preaching there persists a confusion that insists that, since Adam was first, all men are superior to all women. Crane writes, “being born first does not always indicate superiority in the Bible, as with David” (57). David was the youngest of eight sons.

One of the first lessons in hermeneutics is not to make an entire doctrine surrounding one verse, and, yet, so many churches have completely enshrined 1 Timothy 2:12, so that to question their interpretation is to invoke scrutiny of one’s salvation and intervention to save one’s soul. It has become a salvific passage when, at best, it should be a secondary issue. Crane does this verse justice by explaining the singular usage of *authentēin* employing context from other ancient sources (57-58). Not only should women learn, but, when they teach, they should do so gently, not in a domineering manner. Since women are encouraged to teach elsewhere in the Bible and found prophesying in the Bible, Crane concludes this verse “must be viewed critically in context of the main thrust of [Paul’s] teaching” (61).

Chapter 11 might be my favorite chapter as it quickly dispels fifteen items that the Bible does *not* say, including that the Bible does not establish a pattern that only men should teach or lead men (73), and that the Bible does not say a woman needs a spiritual “covering” by a man (74). In her concluding chapter, Crane writes how Jesus continually taught people to live by kingdom principles which were “in stark contrast to his culture” (77). Jesus must be the leader of our households and our churches. “Through Jesus, what was lost in the Garden of Eden begins to be restored” (80). If a male leader feels threatened by a woman, that man is not placing his identity in Christ but rather in his own power structure. Instead, we must each not conform to the patterns of this world (Rom 12:2).

While Crane’s book is excellently researched and backed by an abundance of sources cited, it would be interesting to see what the opposition has to say on such matters. Does its proponents simply rest on the traditions of men and their churches? Are they similar to me who changed once the evidence came to light? Perhaps a middle ground would be to accept that this is a tertiary issue open to interpretation and the promptings of the Holy Spirit.

Crane’s book will serve well as an ancillary resource for seminary and undergrad courses focused on leadership, women’s issues, or hermeneutics, as well as a go-to guide for preachers and leaders who want to have a ready answer for more faithful translation and exposition of leadership themes. Any individual who wishes to evaluate her or his own prejudices and understanding will benefit from this book.

Lauren Mulford is a seminary student at Union Theological College and the PhD Administrator at Kirby Laing Centre. She enjoys spending time with her husband and eight children.

Review of *Eve Isn't Evil: Feminist Readings of the Bible to Upend Our Assumptions* by Julie Faith Parker (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2023)

GRACE Y. MAY

Eve Isn't Evil is intended for a wide audience, ranging from scholars to any reader interested in women and the Bible. Julie Parker's goal is to paint a fresh and positive portrayal of biblical women by reading the Old Testament from a feminist perspective. She received her Ph.D in Old Testament from Yale University and has taught at a variety of seminaries, including Union Theological Seminary and New York Theological Seminary. In the main, she reflects scholarship with liberal underpinnings.

Parker provides an eye-opening and engaging jaunt through the Scriptures. Weaving her personal journey throughout, she makes theological insights that can be profound, yet readily understandable. In chapter one, abandoning the need to adhere to the Enlightenment privileging of rationality, she affirms the intersection of the supernatural in our lives (3). In chapter two, she begins with a pop quiz, asking readers to identify the two most famous women of the Bible (9), and at least I picked the same two women she guessed I would. In chapter three, she conjectures that Joseph may have been autistic based on his special abilities, which his jealous brothers take issue with (38). In chapter four, she addresses "Sex Workers, Slaughters, and Deities without Borders," by opening with a frightening experience in New Orleans with cursed beads to help modern readers identify with ancient Canaanites who believed that the gods pervaded all of life. (43). Then to help readers identify with the desperation of prostitutes, she relates a moving story of her own experience working with a prostitute named Anne. Despite providing Anne with a comfortable home for several months until she gave birth, Parker could not believe that Anne was still prostituting herself throughout her pregnancy in order to buy drugs. Then, the young mother had to put her newborn up for adoption and a couple of years later died of HIV (50-52). This story without a happy ending segues into the final part of the chapter which deals with no less of a difficult topic, wars. Parker contends that massacres described in Scripture are descriptive, not prescriptive (53). Therefore, there is no justification for using the story of Joshua's conquest to kill Native Americans, as European expansionists did (53-54). In chapter five, she invites readers to listen to their anger and convert it into a positive prophetic energy for justice (66). In chapter six, the author redeems poor Job's wife from the ignominy of telling her husband to curse God and die when the actual words in Hebrew are "Bless God and die" in Job 2:9 (73). *Bārêk* is the direct translation from the Hebrew and means "bless," as indicated by the footnote in the New Revised Standard Version. In chapter seven, she provides insight on Psalm 121's reference to lifting up one's eyes and seeking God's help. On a trip to Nicaragua, where she drove in a truck with enemies lurking in the mountains, she desperately hung onto God for help (99). In chapter eight she speaks of Moses' salvation through the collaboration of girls and women (104). Then in chapter nine she defines a feminist as anyone who cares for and respects women as much men and calls Jesus "My Favorite Feminist Jew." She also argues persuasively that Mary the Magdalene could be translated Mary the Magnified One, recovering her from centuries of aspersion as a promiscuous woman or prostitute. She apparently bases her translation on the fact that *migdal* means "tower" in Hebrew, but I do not see any other scholarship supporting her interpretation. In chapter ten, she redeems Genesis 3:16, arguing that "toil" and "pregnancies" are multiplied, not grief or hardship (134). She concludes her discussion of Genesis 3 by challenging the assertion that women must be subject to men throughout their lives but men do not need to farm and suffer from relentless toil (135). She also affirms the need to read the Scriptures from children's perspective, a new branch of biblical studies known as "childist biblical interpretation" (141). Lastly, she leaves us with a provocative suggestion that Mary and Martha could possibly be one and the same person (156-60).

After reading the book, I was impressed with many of Parker's ideas that challenge conventional readings of women's stories in the Scriptures. At the same time, I was also unsettled by a number of her assertions and interpretations. In her opening line, she writes that "The genesis of this book was a meeting with a medium" (1). At a low point in her career, she did consult a medium, and while I appreciate her openness and vulnerability, God forbids consulting mediums in Scripture. Yet Parker sees nothing wrong with the act and even portrays the medium of Endor as a compassionate prophet, who is making the most of her spiritual gifts (62-63).

Parker's vivid paraphrase of the creation account lifts Eve up as the heroine of the story (12-20). On the other hand, the author seems to go too far, by implying that because the word "fall" is not used in the Scriptures then perhaps Eve did not sin (21). Parker asserts that Eve does not leave with Adam after eating from the tree of knowledge, because "only the-man (singular)" was banished from the garden (21). But the word *adam* in Hebrew can refer to either Adam or humankind, including the woman and the man. Then Parker makes the case that Eve "thinks before she acts," and her curiosity and thirst for knowledge (22) qualify her to be "the mythical mother of all discerning people" (22). Parker says, "I am proud to be a child of the mother of the living – and I hope you are, too" (22). While all human life subsequent to creation flow from her, I find the author's description of Eve similar to gnostic versions of creation, where Eve's act of disobedience is viewed as a wise step, bringing enlightenment into the world. The book opens with Eve declaring:

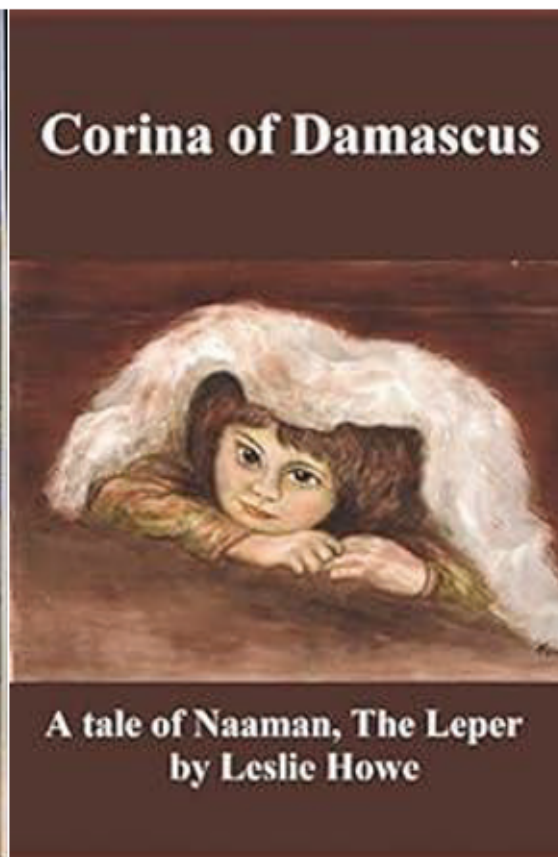
I shook awake –
at once alive in a blaze of green fire.
Let it be known I did not fall from grace,
I leapt
to freedom.

- Ansel Elkins
"The Autobiography of Eve"

Parker states that "The Bible is our introduction to the God who loves us, not the conclusion. Nothing can limit the love of God, *not even the Bible*" (49). The determining factor for whether she accepts or "resists" a text (53) is whether the text "affirm[s] God's will for love and life" (53). Parker explains how she applies the principle of love in her hermeneutics. "When the words of the Bible are used in hurtful ways, we can refuse to accept interpretations that go against the power of love that is God" (113). But who makes the determination as to what goes "against the power of love that is God" (113)? Who makes the call between what is the conviction of the Spirit versus personal bias, if not the God of the Scriptures? For example, Parker asserts that Galatians 3:28 is meant "to abolish binary divisions among the faithful" (127). While I would agree that the verse applies to ethnicities, classes, and even gender, she intimates that it may have wider application. She writes, "Many people think the Bible sanctions only heterosexual, monogamous relationships between a cisgender man and a cisgender woman, but that understanding...stems from the interpreter's own biases. Biblical texts can also support people who are queer, transgender, and nonbinary" (127). I am not sure I encountered those texts in her book.

I find Parker at her best when she brings to light insights from the original Hebrew text and questions traditional perceptions of women in the Bible. Thus, I would recommend her book to inquiring and critical minds who seek bold new interpretations, while keeping in balance that the author relies overwhelmingly on liberal scholarship. (See her recommended readings in the Appendix.) In her final analysis, she concludes that the Scriptures contain the writings of a "male elite and their distorted views" (179). In contradistinction, I believe that the Scriptures were inspired by God (2 Tim 3:16) and present a God who empathizes and speaks to us in life's back roads, battles, and breakthroughs as God did in biblical times.

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Review of *Ecclesiastes: A Reflective Exposition* by Thomas Miersma (Jenison, MI: Reformed Free, 2022)

LESLIE ELAINE SMITH HOWE

I was reared as a Presbyterian where exposure to the Westminster Shorter Catechism was an integral part of classes for confirmation of children. We memorized a number of the questions and answers. I attended a Presbyterian College and received a scholarship that was available for those who would memorize the entire 107 answers to the question it poses and write an essay related to the Westminster Shorter Catechism. During my freshman year, only three of us recited the answers to the 107 questions to the chairman of the Bible Department. Over the years I have come to believe that learning the catechism has been of more value to me than the financial prize itself.

Years later my husband and I became richly aware of the Reformed standards of other Reformed denominations when my husband was working as an assistant pastor at a Presbyterian church in Sydney, Nova Scotia on the Island of Cape Breton. Most of the members were of Scottish ancestry. In the church there were so many Donald MacDonalds that they were distinguished by their middle initial! They were referred to as “Donald A.” or “Donald M.” and a variety of other middle initials. They didn’t even mention the last name! In Nova Scotia, the number of MacDonalds actually exceeds the number of Smiths. A quick Google search now reveals these numbers. The number of MacDonalds is 17,316, and the number of Smiths is 10,424. These numbers include the mainland of Nova Scotia and not just the island of Cape Breton.

One Sunday, we noticed a “new” young couple and invited them to join us for lunch. During that visit the couple, named Hilbert and Mary, provided us with an unexpected introduction to the Dutch Reformed tradition. Hilbert was on a temporary assignment in Sydney. Since there was no Christian Reformed Church in Sydney his home pastor suggested that they might worship with the Presbyterians! We were so glad they did and I believe we learned more from them than they did from us. When we met Hilbert and Mary that thought made me want to know about the “Reformed Church.”

Hilbert said that they were staying at a nearby campground and that someone he met had asked what he believed. He said that the Heidelberg Catechism was the first thing that came to his mind and he had answered with a form of the answer to the first question of the Heidelberg Catechism, “My only comfort in life and in death is that I am not my own, but that I belong—body and soul, in life and in death—to my faithful Savior, Jesus Christ who has fully paid for all my sins with his precious blood, and has set me free from the tyranny of the devil. He also watches over me in such a way that not a hair can fall from my head without the will of my Father in heaven; in fact, all things must work together for my salvation. Because I belong to him, Christ, by his Holy Spirit, assures me of eternal life and makes me wholeheartedly willing and ready from now on to live for him” (adapted from question one from The Heidelberg Catechism, written in 1563).

My husband and I were overwhelmed with Hilbert’s response to the camper’s question. I imagine that the person who asked the question was also surprised. We resolved to look up the Heidelberg Catechism and hoped to memorize at least the answer to its first question.

Loving God with all our mind means digging into the biblical revelation handed down to us including the Jewish categories, “the Law,” “Prophets” and “Writings” and the New Testament “Gospels,” “Acts” and “Letters.” The Bible provides a lifetime adventure of learning for the Christian.

When I was young and first attempted to lead Bible Studies (1965) with young people and wanted to venture into the “Wisdom Literature” of the Old Testament, I was helped by the fact that

Pete Seeger had written a “hit” song using the words of Ecclesiastes.¹ I would have loved to have read the work by Thomas Miersma on Ecclesiastes (if it had been written!) before I started a study of Ecclesiastes with the young people. Our study would have been richer and more inspiring.

When I began to review *Ecclesiastes, A Reflective Exposition* by Thomas Miersma, the first thing I noticed about the book *Ecclesiastes* was the fact that Thomas Miersma stands in the tradition of the Reformed Church and the Heidelberg Catechism. I was eager to see what he had to say. (I also noticed that he also has 432 sermons online at “Sermon Audio”!)

I realized, as I read on, this book will be a resource for anyone who is seeking to learn from Wisdom Literature, specifically the book of Ecclesiastes. It is exactly what its title claims, a reflective exposition by Rev. Thomas Miersma on Ecclesiastes. Rev. Thomas Miersma graduated from the Protestant Reformed Seminary in 1982. He was ordained and installed into the ministry at Edmonton, AB, Canada in 1982. In 1994 he was called to serve as home missionary of the Protestant Reformed Churches. He labored first in Alamosa, Colorado and later and currently in Spokane, Washington.²

Part one of the book is entitled “Introduction to the book of Ecclesiastes.” It includes essays regarding authorship (advocating for Solomon) and the major themes of the book by eminent Protestant Reformed Church pastors, Cornelius C. Hanko (1907-2005) and George Ophoff (also a seminary professor) (1891-1962). These essays provide a readable and excellent background to Ecclesiastes. Don’t skip them; they are rich in the teaching of the Protestant Reformed Church. Thomas Miersma is providing the Church with the wisdom of these two faithful pastors which otherwise might be lost. While reading them, I came to appreciate those of the Christian Reformed traditions and also learned the names of some of the leaders of its traditions.

Part two of the book is titled “Exposition of Ecclesiastes,” which is where the commentary by Thomas Miersma is presented in a very readable and pleasant style. I found it helpful that the body of the book provides the text for every chapter in the book of Ecclesiastes making it a useful tool for Bible Study Groups that want a manageable reading assignment for group study. The reader will find that each chapter in Ecclesiastes correlates with the same chapter number in the book. Miersma also includes the text in sections throughout the commentary so that the Scriptures (KJV) can be readily referenced by the reader.

Pastor Miersma demonstrates the principle of Scripture interpreting Scripture by supplying meaningful references from both the Old and New Testaments to sections of Ecclesiastes. One such reference is Ecclesiastes 3:14 (“Nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it”) and Romans 11:36 (“All things are ‘of him and through him and to him’” (p. 56). It is apparent that much attention has been given to draw the rest of Scripture into the commentary. I myself intend to sit down to read the commentary as a devotional over many days, allowing the Wisdom of Solomon to do its work. The book is what it claims to be on the cover, “A Reflective Exposition,” worthy of reflective thought.

I would suggest you too read the book thoughtfully. Imagine that the author is confiding what he sees in the text to stimulate your own understanding. Make the journey with him.

In short, I think that *Ecclesiastes, A Reflective Exposition* would be a good addition to the library of any Christian who wishes to delve into the riches of “Wisdom Literature” for himself or to help others to do so. The book is available in hardcover on Amazon. It is well worth keeping to read again and again. A paperback edition or a kindle version might make it more accessible.

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1 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Turn!_Turn!_Turn!

2 Image and bio may be found at <https://www.prca.org/audiosermons/Ministers/TMiersma.htm>.

a public-school teacher teaching computer languages and math, camp counselor, Sunday School teacher, and served as a Pastor's wife. She is also the author of several historical novels: *Hatshepsut, The Pharaoh's Daughter* and *Corina of Damascus* and a compilation of poems, *A Child's Garden of Verses by Robert Louis Stevenson and Me: Childhood in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*.

How did she come to write these two historical novels?

"As a child I learned many of the Bible stories but had no idea which story came first or why, nor the theology that is clothed in the stories. This is normal for a child, but, when we become an adult 'man' (whether a male or female 'adult') it is time to 'love the LORD our God with all our mind!' We need to turn our attention to the whole word of God which includes the categories of the Law, Prophets, and Writings. The desire to know propelled me to attend seminary. There, in addition to an introduction to Hebrew and Greek, I learned from Dr. Roger Nicole (Theology), two professors with the names that were pronounced as "Dr. Keer" (History and Greek) and Dr. Philip E. Hughes (Church History and Theology), Dr. Meredith Kline (O.T. and Hebrew) and Dr. Addison Leitch (Theology). Dr. Meredith Kline from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary (GCTS) helped me understand the variety of books in the Bible and their structure. He helped us see Deuteronomy as a covenant document between God and his people. He later published the book entitled *The Treaty of the Great King* and in class presented the idea that the prophets were in some cases bringing 'lawsuits' against those who had forgotten God's gracious covenant or treaty under Moses. He described the 'Writings' of David and Solomon as the overflowing response of converted souls to fill our hearts and draw us to God: "These books were written for our instruction" 1 (Cor. 10; 6-11, Rom. 15; 4, 15).

"Paul echoes the same allegiance to that thought to the young Timothy: 'All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness' (2 Tim. 3:16) KJV) We are enjoined to master the whole of Scripture. Dr. Addison Leitch, who also taught at GCTS, made an aside comment at the beginning of class. He said something like 'my grandmother, great grandmother knew only one Book, 'The Bible,' but understand she was a thoroughly educated woman."

"I began to write *Hatshepsut, the Pharaoh's Daughter* after the death of Dr. Meredith Kline to help readers of the Bible to place the 'stories' in the context of the history of the world. Dr. Kline gave convincing arguments that Moses was found by the famous would-be female pharaoh, Hatshepsut. I believe that his insights needed to be shared with the lay people of the church. Remembering now books like *Ben Hur* and *The Silver Chalice* helped me when I was a teenager, I wrote an historical novel about Hatshepsut. After the book was printed, I gave a copy to a friend who had a young daughter. After he read it to her, he reported that she was enthusiastic and wanted to know if I had written any other books. That was enough for me. I asked myself what other parts of the Bible are unknown by young people. The answer came to me: 'Little is known about 2 Kings' (the time after David and Solomon.) I took up the challenge and centered on the story of Naaman and the 'little maid.' That story would provide a point of contact with young children. I had learned some time earlier that the name Corina means 'little maid' when I met a child by that name in an inner-city mission in Canada. I had looked up her name out of curiosity and had been surprised by its meaning. When challenged to write a second historical novel, I remembered the young girl and began to write *Corina of Damascus: A Tale of Naaman, the Leper*. The personality of the child in the book is a reflection of the Corina I knew in Canada who listened intently to every Bible story."

These books are available from www.amazon.com.

Review of *Charismatic Christianity: Introducing Its Theology through the Gifts of the Spirit* by Helen Collins (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2023)

PAUL F. BRICKER

Dr. Helen Collins, an Anglican priest, vice principal academic and tutor in practical theology at Trinity College with a PhD from the University of Bristol, states clearly her fourfold aim: First, “this book aims to give you [a charismatic] language and a framework to understand better and confidently speak about your tradition” (p. 2). “Second, I hope through this advocacy to show the distinctive contribution that charismatic theology can make to Pentecostal scholarship” (p. 3). She sees with Simon Chan that there is a basic problem with Pentecostalism: “in overtly focusing on a spiritual experience at the expense of a theological explanation rooted in the wider Christian faith” (p. 2).

“Third, this advocacy for the distinctiveness of the charismatic tradition within Pentecostal scholarship is also advocacy for charismatic spirituality as a theologically coherent contributor to global theological discussion” (p. 4). There is nothing wrong with wholesome ecumenism. And, finally, “the fourth purpose of this book is to highlight how and where the charismatic tradition needs renewal of its belief and practices” (p. 5). Every tradition always needs to be renewing itself and displacing any “honor culture.” Pentecostals and Charismatics have had a problem with “honor culture.” Many have a misinterpretation of I Chronicles 16:22a: “Do not touch my anointed [ones].”¹ Many think that passage means do not criticize your leaders. It certainly does not mean that, and Dr. Collins supports self-criticism.

Dr. Collins deals with the spiritual gifts under the following chapter headings that start with the letter “E”: Expectancy includes the gift of prophecy and the gift of teaching along with dangers with the prophetic practice. Enchantment includes the gift of miracles (including deliverance from demons), the gift of administration and dangers of miraculous enchantment. Encounter includes the gift of healings, helping and dangers of healing encounters. Expression includes utterances of wisdom and knowledge, the gift of discernment of spirits and the dangers of the exercise of the gift of wisdom and knowledge. Equality includes the gifts of tongues, interpretation of tongues, and the dangers with the expression of such gifts. Empowerment includes the gift of faith, an expression of mission, the gift of service, and dangers of empowered faith. Finally, Enjoyment includes the gift of encouragement, gift of giving and showing mercy, and the dangers of the gift of encouragement.

There are many things to like about this book. Pentecostals and Charismatics emphasize the supernaturalism/preternaturalism of the New Testament. The cessationists, whether reformed or dispensationalists, tend to have an “Eeny, meeny, miny, moe, here is another New Testament practice that must go” mentality. The cessationists deny the gift of prophecy, yet the apostle Paul commands us to seek the gift of prophecy: “Pursue love, yet desire earnestly spiritual gifts[,] but especially that you may prophesy” (1 Cor. 14:1). How cessationists get around that verse, I have no idea.

In fact, I ask are cessationists really fully obedient disciples of Christ? In the Great Commission, we find that the Lord Jesus wants His church to make disciples of all nations: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you” (Matt. 28:19f). Many cessationists believe that to make a disciple we need to baptize converts and teach them. Note that the Lord wants us to teach them not just the Bible in general but the commands of the Lord Jesus in particular. This means all the commandments of the Lord, including: “Do not be worried” (Matt. 6:25) and “Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons” (Matt. 10:8). Why should not an author

1 The NASB is cited unless otherwise indicated.

write a book on discipleship that goes over all the commandments of the Lord?

Dr. Collins lists seven dangers of healing encounters. Number three is an important pastoral aspect of healing ministry. She writes: "The danger of insisting on the faith needed healing to happen, which leaves those who are not healed feeling shame for not having enough faith. In extreme cases, this can lead to sick people deliberately avoiding medical treatment as a demonstrating of their faith that God will heal" (p. 83). The church needs lovingly to shepherd the sick. We do not need to condemn the sick. I have seen people healed quickly and some have taken years of prayer. I have also seen people not healed. Yet most have received a measure of healing and no one ever feels condemned by my healing ministry.

Here are two problems with the book that could be improved in the next edition:

1. The book is way too systematic. It categorizes the gifts of the Spirit in these chapters: Expectancy, Enchantment, Encounter, Expression, Equality, Empowerment, and Enjoyment. Why put the gift of miracles in the same category as administration? I Peter tells us how to categorize the gifts of the Holy Spirit: "As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. Whoever speaks is to do so as one who is speaking the utterance of God; whoever serves is to do so as one who is serving by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen" (I Pet. 4:10-11). Biblical categories for spiritual gifts are speaking gifts and serving gifts.

2. My second problem with the book is putting the notion of miracles in the chapter called "Enchantment." I understand the anointing power of the Holy Spirit. I understand one of the great distinctives of the Lord's ministry is that: "He was teaching them as one having authority, and not as their scribes" (Matt. 7:29). I would never say that teaching or ministering under the anointing power of the Holy Spirit is "Enchantment." At least in the United States, I think the term 'Enchantment' appears to be a witchcraft term. Many times, when I have taught or ministered under the anointing power of the Holy Spirit, I have seen people attracted to such teaching or ministering. I have also experienced "Enragement." The ministry of the new covenant is: "But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place. For we are a fragrance of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing; to one an aroma from death to death, to another an aroma of life to life" (2 Cor. 2:14-16a). There is an attractiveness or anointing to being a minister of the New Covenant. We are an aroma of life to life to certain people. To those opposed to the Gospel, this anointing is an aroma of death to death.

One can see this in the ministry of the Lord Jesus. In Luke 4 the Lord Jesus starts His public ministry. He preaches a one sentence sermon: "Today, this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing" (Luke 4:21). Note the dual response, on one hand, there is an "attractiveness": "And all were speaking well of Him and wondering at the gracious words which were falling from His lips" (Luke 4:22). This is the New Covenant ministry of life unto life. On the other hand, there were those in the crowd who expressed enragement: "And all the people in the synagogue were filled with rage as they heard these things" (Luke 4:28). This is the New Covenant ministry of death unto death.

I would recommend the book for both teachers and students at seminaries and Bible colleges because it is an important book that attempts to bring clarity to Charismatic and Pentecostal theologies. We need more books on this subject.

Chaplain Paul F. Bricker has planted four churches in the past. He is currently Hospice Chaplain at the Beckley Veterans Administration Hospital. He does not in any way speak for his hospital or for the Federal Government in this review. His wife (Evelyn) and he pastor the Beckley Advent Christian Church in Beckley, West Virginia. He is also the pastor of Steve's Auto Parts in Oak Hill, WV. Chaplain Bricker has been experiencing "being caught up in the Spirit to preach the Gospel" like Phillip the evangelist. At work he prays with nine different groups of staff daily. All were started by him being caught up by

the Spirit. As well, he was getting some auto parts at Steve's Auto Parts, when the Spirit "caught him up." Very soon, he and the staff and customers were praying together three times per week. Now he is coming every day and sometimes twice a day. They even had a Christmas dinner! They will say that he is their pastor. Rev. Bricker fulfills the Great Commission in unusual places.